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420**

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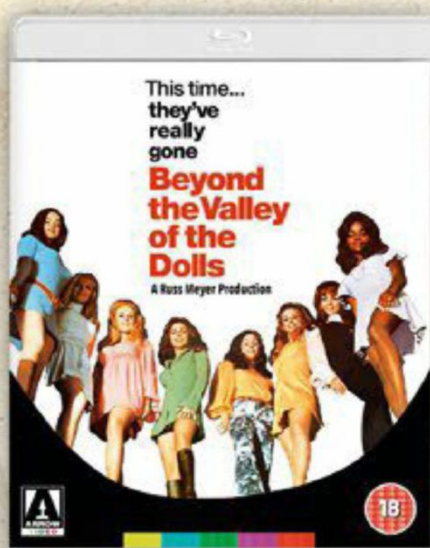
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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 420!

Yet again we are delving into the history of this very magazine. Last month, we harkened back to our very beginning with our **Star Wars: The Force Awakens** cover, and here we are again sporting a cover that will give some of our long term readers a healthy blast from then past. Mulder and Scully are back on our cover to celebrate the welcome return of **The X-Files** to its natural home on the small screen. If you picked up a copy of **STARBURST** or our sister publication, the sadly deceased **TV Zone** in the 1990's chances are that **The X-Files** would be on the cover. If only I could just put the same property on the cover each month, yet back in the day, **X-Files** was the biggest fantasy property in the world, and literally everyone seemed to be a fan. **STARBURST** avidly covered the entire run of the show, yet sadly all good things, etc., and it looked likely that you would never again see these former cultural icons on our cover. So you can imagine we were over the moon to see them back in their rightful place, and to celebrate we have a preview of what to expect from their new adventures, whilst taking a look at what has happened so far...

Now you will also be aware that this is the issue where we bring you the **Top 40 Movies of the year**. Expect many surprises in the year that has seen much more than the usual amount of movies surpassing expectations both critically, and in terms of good, hard, box office moolah. Whilst looking back at 2015, we always bring you the very best of what to look out for next year. Our **2016 Preview** is your one-stop guide when it comes to planning your upcoming genre entertainment. It's literally jam packed with everything you don't know that you can't miss.

It's also time to see some of the very best and very worst that our genre threw up this year. Check out which rampant clowns, and total heroes will bag a coveted **Brozzer** in the **It's Only A Movie Awards 2015**. Rest assured, myself and Zombaby will remind you of some of the things that didn't exactly go according to plan, in a ceremony that thrives on an unhealthy amount of schadenfreude.

You might think we have run out of room, but you would be wrong. We also take a look at the festive return of Quentin Tarantino in **The Hateful Eight**, and celebrate the fantastic **Jessica Jones**, get hooked into a **Human Centipede** and still end up **Survivors**.

Still want more? Well, how about all of your favourite columns, and all of your regular fun stuff? It's crazy how we cram it in (Damn! The double entendres of Martin Unsworth have infected my Editorial!).



Until next issue,
Keep watching the weird and wonderful,

Jordan Royce

Jordan Royce
EDITOR



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STAR

BLAST(ER) TO MY PAST

Dear Mr Royce, Serendipity (Chance discovery I think?) has it that I purchased issue 419 from a local retailer as my usual choices were not apparent and to be fair I hadn't seen your magazine for years in passing. I suppose having 3 kids doesn't allow the browse rights I used to have :(...

Anyway, what causes me to write is the feeling the magazine has given me. I am 15 again! The look, feel and even the smell of issue 419 took me back to 1985-ish. By 'smell' I mean the magazine smelt like the one I remember some place between 1982-1989 where there was a preview of Hannibal Lecter in the forthcoming SILENCE OF THE LAMBS and even better a rant over BLADE RUNNER and its successes and failures. A retro feel to issue 419 and a retro paper smell from better years gone by.

Thank you for (Force) Awakening me once more. I am hooked and will purchase your teams efforts from this day forth.

Serendipity indeed.

LORD OF THE WINGE

I was excited to learn of your return to print, then horrified when I picked it up. When I was little, STARBURST was a magazine about science fiction and excitement. Now you are all about message fiction, crazy dead hippies and that anti-war protestors with time machines. The pages seem written for SJW's by SJW's. Please change.
 Lord Bumble, via EMAIL

Well if that's the case, then it sounds like you could do with one of those time machines. #WellJel

FORTUNE FAVOURS THE DICK

Long time fan, first time I have written in.

I was very impressed by your feature on Phillip K. Dick. Ed Fortune must really like Dick.

Oh! And by the way, BLADE RUNNER was awesome and I am now searching the Web for an OffWorld PDK Blaster – See you next month!

Jim Brown, aged 15 or 45 – Doesn't matter anymore!!!!!!, via EMAIL

Great to hear! STARBURST, it's better than botox! And a lot cheaper!

Here's the SILENCE OF THE LAMBS preview in issue 153 for you to reminisce over!



LETTER

It's a long, firm and satisfying piece, he must be very proud of it. Loved your feature on THE MAN IN THE HIGH CASTLE; excellent piece on what turned out to be a great bit of telly. I hope they do Ubik next?

Also, any chance that you will get Southall and Mount in a head to head? Let them slug it out on the page?

Steve Bliss, from KENT

I'm not sure how it would work on paper, but we are willing to set up some kind of sporting event on which readers can place bets. I'm thinking... Dalek-bumpercar battle? May the best fan win!

SECRET BUNKER PODCAST

I've just caught up with the [STARBURST RADIO] podcast [episode 5.33] having missed the show live.

I was very interested to hear of the Nuclear Bunker near Manchester, I fancy seeing if any of my Sci-fi group are up for a visit.

A few years back, whilst visiting Prague, myself and my wife's Uncle went to look at an old Nuclear Bunker. We had to meet 'Ivan in the square holding a rainbow umbrella' (very Michael Caine spy film). We had to get on a tram with him miles out of Prague centre.

We followed him up a hill in the dark and he opened the Bunker door (which was 2ft curved lead to deflect the blast). At this point I became rather worried that if Ivan turned out to be a psychopath we would never be heard of again. We followed Ivan downstairs, about 200ft, using our phones as lights.

Once we got down there it was really cool and interesting. It now has a fully stocked bar and a sound system that is used for weekend raves down there.

I would also recommend the Checkpoint Charlie museum in Berlin, if you have never been, for a look at all the Cold War stuff and Spy gadgets.

I really enjoyed listening to you discuss the Nuclear War movies. I watched WHEN THE WIND BLOWS, THE DAY AFTER and THREADS when they originally aired. THREADS is the one that stuck in my mind the most as I found it very disturbing and upsetting. I do think it is one of the most important films ever made and everyone should see it at least once. Cheers,

David Geldard, via EMAIL

Great minds think alike, I have indeed been to the awesome Checkpoint Charlie Museum in Berlin (not sure about

the male models dressed as soldiers at the actual checkpoint though!) Nuclear war is a rich topic for this genre, and whilst we pray that this will forever remain the stuff of pure fantasy, there remains a morbid fascination with the actual reality of such a horrific event. THREADS was a much needed jolt back in the day, and still stands up as a scary window into a very real nightmare that we can only hope to collectively avoid.

Jordan M. Royce, Editor

NEW WARS ORDER

Is Kieron Moore on your staff a huge Joy Division/New Order fan? It seems he must be to randomly include the following words in his article "An Awakening" - "The villains at this time are the *New Order* First Order, created out of the remains of *Joy Division* the Empire" (My italics). Or is this some kind of subliminal marketing message? Maz, via EMAIL

Yeah sorry about that, Kieron's a bit pre-occupied at the moment, he's got their music on the brain. He's started a sci-fi crossover New Order tribute band, they're calling themselves *Who Order*.

Look out for their first EP stuck to the front of the mag in the future...

X-N0000

Thanks for giving me nightmares with that photo of XTRO [Issue 419]! It was a very interesting interview with Tim Dry, apart from the terror! Colin, from BEHIND THE COUCH

You're welcome. Everyday is Halloween.



Winner: Brian Edwards. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

STARBURST

NEXT ISSUE: 421 ON SALE FROM JANUARY 15TH

THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS



DC

With Jason Momoa's Aquaman set to make his DCCU debut in March's **Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice**, some details are starting to emerge (or should that be submerge?) on the King of Atlantis' solo movie. To be directed by James Wan, **Aquaman** looks set to feature Ocean Master as the main villain of the film. Ocean Master, of course, is Aquaman's brother, and part of the rationale behind Warner Brothers looking to take this particular route is down to them wanting to mimic the 'battling brothers' dynamic of Marvel's **Thor** movies. Additionally, it's also believed that Mera, Aquaman's wife, will be present in the film and will be portrayed similarly to how Furiosa was in **Mad Max: Fury Road**; as in she'll be a strong female character who doesn't rely on anyone to fight her battles for her. The King of Atlantis' appearance in **Batman v Superman** is supposedly a minimal one, but he'll then take centre stage when **Aquaman** splashes on to the big screen on July 27th, 2018.

Remember when Guillermo del Toro was writing and helming a **Justice League Dark** movie? Man, they were some good times. Then the film stalled for what seemed like an eternity before del Toro had to admit defeat and focus on other projects. Well, it now looks as if Warner Brothers still have plans to move forward with the movie, with news even coming out on some of the names that the WB are considering for key roles in the film. First up, Colin Farrell and Ewan McGregor are two names in the frame to clear audiences' minds of Keanu Reeves' cinematic John Constantine as they're in the mix to play Hellblazer. It's believed that whoever of Farrell and McGregor doesn't get that role could very well end up playing Jason Blood, the human form that the demonic Etrigan

attaches himself to. Elsewhere, del Toro had previously pushed hard for Ron Perlman, the star of the director's **Hellboy** movies, to play Swamp Thing, and it's understood that Warners are still in favour of this casting choice. For Madame Xanadu, Monica Bellucci is seen as the top choice. Then there's Deadman, for whom the studio is supposedly looking for a comedic actor, and also the magical Zatanna, where The WB is looking for a Hispanic or black actress. Despite all of this, when it comes down to it, **Justice League Dark** still doesn't have a director, a release date, or even a definite 'yes' that it's going to take place at all. For years, it's seemingly been the little engine that could amongst the juggernaut-esque names that Warners is introducing to their DC Cinematic Universe. Once del Toro sadly departed the project, many believed that the film was as good as dead. In an ideal world, del Toro's schedule would free up and he'd re-join **Justice League Dark**, but for now it's at least good to know that the film may happen at some point regardless.

Now whilst **Aquaman** is a definite 'thing' and **Justice League Dark** is up in the air a little, one potential new addition to the DC Cinematic Universe is Dinah Laurel Lance, aka Black Canary. Whilst Warner Brothers has plans to introduce a whole myriad of DC names over the next few years, it's a little sad to see that Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman is the only female lead character. As such, Black Canary is seen as one way of expanding the female presence in the DCCU. The two names being looked at for the gig right now are **Mad Max: Fury Road**'s Abbey Lee and **Supernatural**'s Alona Tal, with the plan being to introduce Canary at some point during Zack Snyder's two-part **Justice League** before eventually doing a **Birds of Prey**-style female team-

up movie down the line. Interestingly, it's believed that Jena Malone's mystery **Batman v Superman** role is that of Barbara Gordon, aka Batgirl, aka Oracle, aka the person who set up the Birds of Prey team with Black Canary.

Swooping down to the small screen, and CBS has ordered an extra seven episodes of **Supergirl**, which brings the show's first season up to a full order of twenty. Many were uncertain how well the Melissa Benoist-starring series would do when it was first announced, hence why there was only an initial order of thirteen episodes, but, having averaged 11.24 million viewers per episode in the US, **Supergirl** has done enough to justify a full season order. In fairness to the show, many of us here at Moonbase Alpha were expecting a complete stinker based on the early promo work, yet the end product has been refreshingly solid if not spectacular. The show is set to get a little more 'super', though, with news coming out that it's looking to cast a 13-year-old with "future leading man looks" for the role of a young Clark Kent for a bunch of flashback moments that are supposedly to be used to establish the bond between Kal-El and Kara. Of course, this maybe doesn't make all that much sense. After all, the show itself has already established that Kara was trapped in The Phantom Zone when the Last Son of Krypton was 13 years of age. As such, it will be interesting to see how this young Supes-in-waiting is used.

And whilst the teen Kal-El is on his way, young Bruce Wayne has an addition of his own over in **Gotham**, where **Doctor Who**'s Michelle Gomez has joined as the mysterious 'Lady'. **Gotham**'s second season is already showing in the US, where it's receiving a favourable response, but we UK types have to wait until next year to see **Gotham** return to Channel 5.

Speaking of returns, Colton Haynes took to Twitter this past month to reveal that he is returning to **Arrow**. Haynes' character of Roy Harper/Arsenal was written out of the main storyline of the show last season, with the actor himself deciding to pursue more movie roles, including nabbing a part in Dwayne Johnson's **San Andreas**. As for Roy, he'd taken the blame for being the Arrow and was sent to prison for his apparent crimes where he was promptly killed by some inmates. This was revealed to all be a ruse to fake his death and ended up with Harper leaving Starling City, although he'd appear once more when Thea Queen tracked him down 'out of town'. The actor's return is set to only be a brief one though, so don't be expecting Roy Harper to become a fully-fledged member of Team Arrow again just yet.

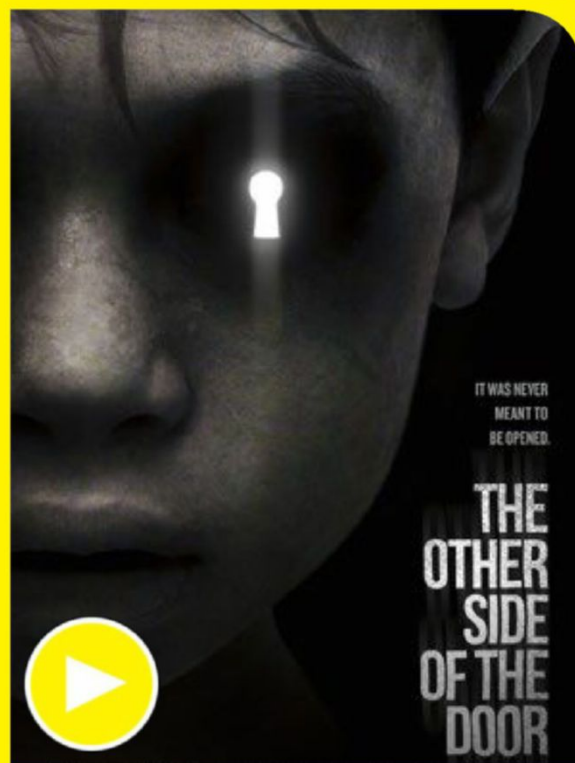
In some final DC-related news, **DC's Legends of Tomorrow**, which exists in the same universe as **Arrow** and **The Flash**, has found a UK home. To the surprise of no one, the show will air on Sky 1, much like its shared universe brethren. The series will debut in the US on January 21st, although the UK airing date has yet to be confirmed by Sky. Chances are it'll be the following week, if the pattern of **Arrow** and **The Flash** is followed. Plot-wise, **Legends of Tomorrow** sees Rip Hunter arrive from the future in order to put together a ragtag team of 'legends' to take down time-travelling immortal uber-rogue Vandal Savage. Joining Rip will be The Atom, White Canary, Firestorm, Hawkgirl, Hawkman, Captain Cold, and Heat Wave. ^{AP}

INDIANA JONES

After those rumours of someone like Chris Pratt or Bradley Cooper picking up the fedora and bullwhip and replacing Harrison Ford as Indiana Jones, Steven Spielberg has moved to confirm that there will only ever be one Dr Henry Walton 'Indiana' Jones, Jr., "I don't think anyone could replace Harrison as Indy, I don't think that's ever going to happen. It's certainly not my intention to ever have another actor step into his shoes in the way there have been many actors that have played Spider-Man or Batman. There is only going to be one actor playing Indiana Jones and that's Harrison Ford."

When asked about why the director would want to do another Indy outing after the lukewarm response to **Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull**, Spielberg added, "Because there are more adventures out there than films. So as long as there's more adventures out there, I've got a bullwhip, a fedora, a leather jacket and a man on a horse who knows how to get the job done."

Doubts were raised about whether Harrison Ford would star in any future Indy adventures given that the actor is currently 73 years old, and there are no concrete plans in place just yet. Luckily for fans of the franchise, it appears that the actor is in no



If you're a **Walking Dead** fan still mourning Lori Grimes, fear not, as Sarah Wayne Callies will soon be back on the big screen in the upcoming supernatural horror flick **The Other Side of the Door**. Directed and co-written by Johannes Roberts (who helmed the underrated **F** and **Storage 24**), Callies plays a mother who goes to extremely dangerous and terrifying measures in order to say one final goodbye to her dead son. Expect chills when the film opens on March 18th.

danger of being replaced any time soon. The last we'd heard of a new Indiana Jones movie was that one wouldn't arrive for at least another two or three years at the earliest. As ever, expect more on this as and when it develops. ^{AP}

ALIEN: COVENANT

Remember last month's story about Ridley Scott's **Prometheus** sequel being called **Alien: Paradise Lost**? Well it's now officially known as **Alien: Covenant**, and will tell the story of the crew of a colony ship, Covenant. The director has revealed that this follow-up will be one of three **Prometheus**-sequels-cum-**Alien**-prequels.

Speaking at a Sydney press conference, Scott explained, "It's a very complex story. It's an evolution of what I first did with **Prometheus 1**. **Prometheus 1** was borne out of my frustration that on **Alien 1** in 1979 – I only did one as I don't normally do sequels – I was amazed that in the three that followed that no one asked the question 'Why the alien, who made it and why?' Very basic questions. So I came up with the notion of **Prometheus 1**, which starts to indicate who might have made it and where it came from."

He continued, "So I'm now going to the next one, which is the next evolution directly connected with the first one, which was this Shaw, when she replaced Michael Fassbender in two pieces, and we'll kind of pick it up there and it will evolve. When that's finished, there'll be another one and then another one which will gradually drive into the back entrance of the film in 1979. So in other words, why was this space jockey there and why did he have an alien inside him? And those questions will be answered."

Do those particular questions need answering? Do we really need another three movies? Can we not just have Neill Blomkamp's indefinitely-on-hold **Aliens** sequel that focuses on Ripley and Hicks?

At present, **Alien: Covenant** is set to start production in March ahead of an October 6th, 2017 release. ^{AP}



MARVEL

After Josh Trank's **Fantastic Four** bombed earlier this year, many were questioning the future of Marvel's First Family; after all, this was a film that had a sequel confirmed before the first was even released. And as such, it comes as no surprise this month to hear that 20th Century Fox has removed **Fantastic Four 2** from its upcoming movie slate. The sequel was planned for a June 2nd, 2017 release, but the follow-up is now completely off the table. To

give you an idea of just how poorly Trank's **FF** did, it grossed a lowly \$56 million from a \$120 million budget. When you consider that superhero movies can now make over \$1 billion these days, you can see how badly **Fantastic Four** tanked. Interestingly, previous rumours suggested that the cinematic rights to the **Fantastic Four** and their supporting characters had been offered to Marvel in return for Fox obtaining the television rights to the X-Men. Either way, any future big screen **FF** outings won't be happening any time soon.

With Marvel Studios now shooting **Doctor Strange**, the Scott Derrickson-helmed Phase 3 entry has revealed an official cast list. To summarise who's on board, there's Benedict Cumberbatch as the titular Sorcerer Supreme, Tilda Swinton as The Ancient One, Chiwetel Ejiofor as Baron Mordo, Michael Stuhlbarg as Doctor Nicodemus West, and then unknown roles for Rachel McAdams, Scott Adkins, Amy Landecker, and Mads Mikkelsen. What's most interesting is that the list finally confirms that **Hannibal**'s Mikkelsen is now signed on. Mikkelsen had been in talks with Marvel Studios for several months, with his role believed to be that of one of the film's rogues. **Doctor Strange** is currently set for an October 28th release.

Taking things from the Master of the Mystical Arts to the God of Thunder himself, and this past month saw **Thor: Ragnarok** bring in a new writer in the form of Stephany Folsom. Folsom is likely best known for her much-heralded Black List entry, **1969: A Space Odyssey or How Kubrick Learned to Stop Worrying and Land on the Moon**. She's been brought in to work on a screenplay initially put in place by Christopher Yost and Craig Kyle. In some other **Ragnarok** news, we're also hearing that the next outing for the Son of Odin could very well feature a female villain, with Cate Blanchett one name believed to be in the frame. As for who this villain could be, one logical shout is Hela, the Asgardian goddess of death and somebody who takes residence in the Norse depiction of Hell. Considering that the term **Ragnarok** is used in the realm of Thor Odinson as essentially meaning Judgement Day, Hela would certainly fit the bill. Another suggestion is Amora the Enchantress, one of the most powerful magic-based beings in Asgard and beyond. To be directed by **Eagle vs. Shark, Boy, and What We Do in the Shadows'** Taika Waititi, **Thor: Ragnarok** hits cinemas on November 3rd, 2017.

In some final big screen Marvel-themed news, 20th Century Fox's **Gambit** is close to landing **Edge of Tomorrow**'s Doug Liman as its director. Rupert Wyatt was previously on board to helm the Channing Tatum-starrer, but ended up leaving the project a couple of months ago. Liman is believed to be in final negotiations for the gig, with him having beaten out the likes of Joe Cornish, Shane Black, and F. Gary Gray. Despite seemingly cutting it mighty fine, Fox still has **Gambit** pencilled in for an October 7th release.

When it comes to Marvel's small screen adventures, the only news of real note this month is that **Luke Cage** has brought in **Kiss of the Spider Woman**'s Sonia Braga as Soledad Temple, the mother of Rosario Dawson's Claire Temple. Starring Mike Colter as the titular Power Man, the show will follow on the heels of the hugely well-received **Daredevil** and **Jessica Jones**, and this new addition suggests that we'll also likely see Dawson's Claire pop up at some point. Already confirmed for the show are Simone Missick as Misty Knight, Frank Whaley as Rafael Scarfe, Mahershala Ali as Cottonmouth, Theo Rossi as Shades, and Alfre Woodard as Mariah Dillard. **Marvel's Luke Cage** arrives on Netflix next year. AP

horrorchannel

A round-up of what not to miss this month on Horror Channel...

DECEMBER 22ND – HARD CANDY (2005)

Amazingly taut thriller that is essentially a two-hander with Ellen Page (**Junö**) suspecting Patrick Wilson (**The Conjuring**) of being Operation Yewtree material. Director David Slade went on to helm **30 Days of Night** and episodes of **Hannibal** and shows that later potential here. We'll forgive him for **The Twilight Saga - Eclipse**, we've all done stuff we regret for the money.

+++

DECEMBER 25TH – SILENT NIGHT (2012)

'Tis the season and all that, so why not sit down after scoffing your weight in food and booze with this remake of the classic Santa slasher. Some fun gore and a scenery-chewing turn from Malcolm McDowell make this worth watching while trying to keep down your egg nog.

+++

DECEMBER 26TH – DUEL (1971)

Steven Spielberg's second film might have been made for TV, but it still holds up as a masterclass in suspense and terror. Dennis Weaver is brilliant as the innocent businessman traumatised by a relentless unseen assailant in a tanker truck.

+++

DECEMBER 27TH – AT THE EARTH'S CORE (1976)

The ever-reliable Peter Cushing stars opposite Doug McClure (you might remember him from films such as **The Land That Time Forgot**) and Caroline Munro in this rollicking fantasy adventure from Amicus films. Based on a story by Edgar Rice Burroughs, the team encounter strange monsters and danger galore as they mount an expedition to burrow into the ground with their massive mechanical Iron Mole. Not to be completely taken seriously, it's chock full of brilliant dialogue such as Cushing's "You cannot mesmerise me! I'm British!"

+++

Classic **Doctor Who** continues with Tom Baker's Fourth Doctor heading to the **City of Death**, exploring **The Horror of Fang Rock**, getting into trouble with **The Sunmakers** and setting sail to **The Pirate Planet**. Elsewhere, former pop star Luke Goss (**Blade II**) and a star-studded cast (including William Hurt and Donald Sutherland) run through Mary Shelley's classic tale in the two-part **Frankenstein**, directed by **At The Earth's Core**'s Kevin Connor.

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.

AND FINALLY...

In terms of pointless ventures, the recent announcement that Ambi Pictures plan to remake Christopher Nolan's superb **Memento** ranks among the top. That is, of course, unless we've all forgotten it...

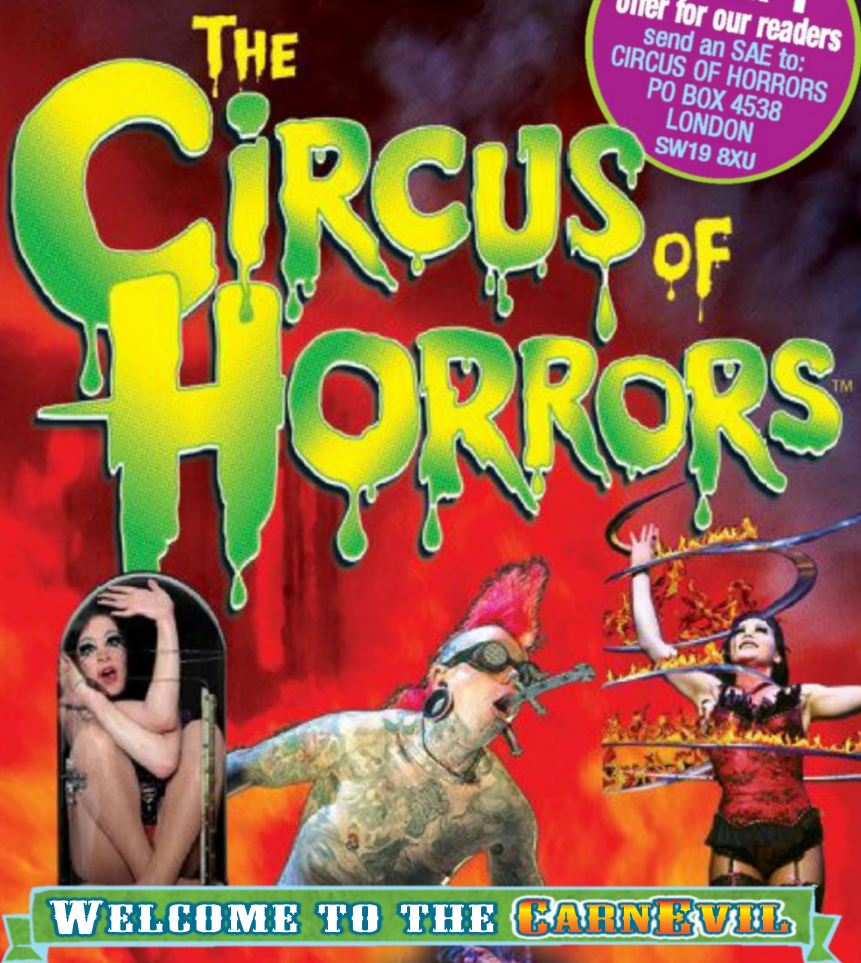
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With **Rambo: Last Blood**, the final film (please!) in the franchise in development already, apparently FOX are making plans for a TV series focusing on J.R., the muscle-bound hero's son. Sylvester Stallone's John Rambo would be expected to make an appearance or two during the run, with the star also serving as executive producer. Entitled **Rambo: New Blood**, there are no other details as yet.

"YOU HAVE TO SEE THIS! ONE DAY SOMETHING WILL GO WRONG AND YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO SAY YOU WERE THERE WHEN IT DID!" - Graham Norton

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TORQUAY Princess Theatre 17 JAN	0844 871 3023 tinyurl.com/oknn9q		PERTH Concert Hall 5 MAR	01738 621 031 horsecross.co.uk
EXETER Corn Exchange 18 JAN	01392 665 938 tinyurl.com/037e979		BIRMINGHAM Alexandra 6 MAR	0844 871 3011 tinyurl.com/nza3uc9
CARDIFF St David's Hall 19 JAN	029 2087 8444 stdavidshallcardiff.co.uk		NORTHAMPTON Royal & Derngate 8 MAR	01604 624 811 royalandderngate.co.uk
CRAWLEY The Hawth 21 JAN	01293 553636 parkwoodtheatres.co.uk/thehawth		TEWKESBURY The Roses 9 MAR	01684 295 074 roses theatre.org
HASTINGS White Rock 22 JAN	01424 462 288 whiterocktheatre.org.uk		GT YARMOUTH Hippodrome 11 MAR	01933 844 172 hippodromecircus.co.uk
CAMBRIDGE Corn Exchange 23 JAN	01223 357 851 cambridgelivetrust.co.uk/cornex		SOUTHSEA Kings Theatre 12 MAR	023 9282 8282 kings-southsea.com
KETTERING Lighthouse Theatre 24 JAN	01536 414 141 lighthouse theatre.co.uk		BOURNEMOUTH Pavilion 13 MAR	0844 576 3000 bic.co.uk
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READING Hexagon 29 JAN	01189 60 60 60 readingarts.com		WEYMOUTH Pavilion 17 MAR	01305 783 225 weymouthpavilion.com
SHEFFIELD City Hall 30 JAN	0114 278 9789 sheffieldcityhall.co.uk		FROME Memorial Theatre 18 MAR	01373 462 795 fmt.website
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TELFORD Okengates Theatre 2 FEB	01952 382 382 thelacetelford.com		SUNDERLAND Empire 20 MAR	0844 871 3022 tinyurl.com/07f19tx
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NEWCASTLE Tyne Theatre & Opera House 13 FEB	0191 243 1171 tynetheatreandoperahouse.co.uk		ANDOVER The Lights 2 MAY	01264 368 368 www.theights.org.uk
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FUTURE SHOCK! THE STORY OF 2000 AD

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: PAUL GOODWIN / STARRING: PAT MILLS, KEVIN O'NEILL, ALAN GRANT, JOHN WAGNER, DAVE BISHOP, GRANT MORRISON, NEIL GAIMAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It has been a long time coming, but the entire history of 2000 AD has been documented in *Future Shock! The Story of 2000 AD*, a new documentary focusing on the turbulent 40 years of one of the most important comics ever created.

Directed by Paul Goodwin, *Future Shock!* is a brand new feature-length documentary which has been well-received at festivals as it boasts a huge selection of interviews from some of the most celebrated names in the comic book industry, such as Grant Morrison, Neil Gaiman and Dave Gibbons, to name a few.

2000 AD creator Pat Mills begins the main focus of the documentary, providing an interesting insight into British comics of the '70s. Birthed by the nihilistic culture of that decade, no other comic made as big an impact as 2000 AD, with its ultra-violence and anti-authoritarian values grabbing the attention of readers across Britain.

From its fascinating conception, *Future Shock!* recounts all aspects of the comic's history, from *Strontium Dog* to Alan Moore's unfinished *Halo Jones*, with interesting snippets from some of 2000 AD's original writers and artists. Despite the sheer

amount of interviewees, Paul Goodwin manages to edit each segment with a unique angle and captivating anecdotes.

Almost everything is touched upon in the documentary, and fans will be pleasantly surprised by some of the unfiltered information that is revealed during the film. We get to know about editor and writer disputes, executive meddling and a disgusting situation regarding artist and writing credits. Even the 'British Invasion' is detailed, when DC's plucking started a troubling new era for the comic.

Whilst the 1 hour 45 minute running length is adequate, it does admittedly feel like some of 2000 AD's more memorable stories could have been explored, along with the inclusion of the unique *Dark Judges*. Perhaps a stronger focus could have been put towards the current state of the comic, along with merchandising and the fandom itself. However, these are minor complaints for a documentary that is already rich with information.

It's an outstanding entry from director Paul Goodwin, who has carefully crafted the best comic book documentary ever made. Unfortunately there aren't a great deal out

there, but *Future Shock!* also manages to appeal to a mass audience whilst keeping avid 2000 AD readers happy.

It's not a self-indulgent trip down memory lane by the creators either, as *Future Shock!* does a great job of lining up some of its more famous readers, such as *Anthrax*'s Scott Ian, *Dredd* scriptwriter Alex Garland and grimacing actor Karl Urban.

Future Shock! The Story of 2000 AD is an illuminating insight into the history of one of the most vital pieces of comic fiction, crafted remarkably well by director Paul Goodwin. It's clear that 2000 AD spawned the success of *Vertigo* and inspired several movies, and it's one of the coolest counterculture comics to ever hit stands.

Paul Goodwin's documentary solidifies that with this labour of love, a very passionate insight to a remarkable 40 years and a stark reminder that we need more documentaries like this.

MATT WELLS

★★★★★★★★★★ 9

STARBURST

DVD & BLU-RAY



MANSON

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: BRANDON SLAGLE / STARRING: RYAN KISER, DEVANNY PINN, TRISTAN RISK, ERIN MARIE HOGAN, SUZI LORRAINE / RELEASE DATE: JAN 11TH

Everyone has heard of Charles Manson and his dysfunctional extended family, so it is to the credit of writer and director Brandon Slagle that his new film feels so fresh and interesting. Instead of focusing on the more seedy or tabloid-filling antics of one of America's most notorious characters, Manson instead explores the psychology behind The Family; the influence Charles had over his followers and

how that manifested itself so destructively. Following Charlie from childhood delinquency through to the orchestrated murders of Sharon Tate and others that resulted in his incarceration, Slagle's film quietly observes the unfolding events with resigned trepidation.

The strength of the film truly lies in the portrayal of Manson himself; Ryan Kiser's performance is laced with menacing charisma, and as

the viewer, you find yourself drawn into his overwrought urban sermons that enraptured his followers. Under Slagle's direction, the character is also unpleasantly sympathetic at times, presenting the irrational with heartfelt rationality and displaying a softness not often seen in other versions. That said, the brooding malevolence is never far from the surface and Kiser carries a psychopathic glint in his eye throughout.

The murders themselves do feel slightly separate from what has gone before, but this does add to the shocking nature of them. They are committed with a cold calculation that belies The Family's initial sense of love, and the brutality is unflinching, explicit and much more in keeping with the outright horror this could have been. The film may not fully succeed in finding a balance, but if nothing else is true to the source.

Manson also doesn't become weighed down with procedure or protracted courtroom exposition. Slagle has chosen to use flashbacks

to advance the narrative, with Charles discussing the case with a defence attorney as the framing device, but this never becomes tedious or threatens to overpower the film itself. Instead, the story is allowed to develop through the characters. Alongside Kiser, the supporting cast all inhabit their roles with conviction, with Devanny Pinn outstanding as the chilling Susan Atkins, whose involvement in the murders is both crucial and deeply upsetting.

For those familiar with the story, Manson won't offer any new insights or conclusions but it does present a different slant on a character whose infamy shows no sign of abating. Slagle's film is of interest though, built on excellent performances and subtle, almost documentary-like direction that draws the viewer in. For those not so familiar, this film is a worthy introduction to a character who warrants further investigation.

JOHN TOWNSEND

★★★★★★★★★ 7



THE GOONIES (30TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S EDITION)

BD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: RICHARD DONNER / SCREENPLAY: CHRIS COLUMBUS / STARRING: SEAN ASTIN, JOSH BROLIN, JEFF COHEN, COREY FELDMAN, KERRI GREEN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

We all know The Goonies. If you don't, you should be ashamed of yourself. Assuming you are one of the handful who should be ashamed of themselves, here's a very brief primer: Let's head back to 1985. The Goonies are a lovable band of pre-teen misfits from the 'Goon Docks' in Oregon. The actors who played The

Goonies weren't so well known at the time, but thirty years on, most of them have names and faces that are very familiar. But we digress. Back to the plot...

When their homes are targeted for demolition, The Goonies set out to save their neighbourhood with the aid of a map and an ancient doubloon that leads them

on an adventure to find the long lost treasure of 17th century buccaneer One-Eyed Willy. Unfortunately for The Goonies, they've got sinister competition for that treasure in the form of the Fratellis, a family of criminals who are running a counterfeiting operation out of a closed-down restaurant.

Before they know it, the kids are dodging booby traps, avoiding the clutches of the bumbling hoodlums, the Fratellis' deformed younger brother and their downright terrifying Mama, and making hair raising escapes through dank and dangerous underground caves, never knowing from one moment to the next if they will escape this quest with their lives or if One-Eyed Willy's treasure even exists.

Will The Goonies save the day, and save their homes? Will they discover One-Eyed Willy's remains and a fabulous pirate galleon loaded with riches? Don't be so sure. There are twists and turns all the way, and for a family adventure, this film can get pretty scary. Also, don't forget the movie was directed

by Richard Donner, who's no stranger to a downer climax - after all, he killed off Gregory Peck to let Damien Thorn continue his reign of terror - so there's no guarantee of happy endings. But here's the deal: whether you've only watched it once or you've seen it a hundred times, The Goonies is one of the best-loved family movies ever made for a very good reason: it is absolutely fantastic!

And speaking of fantastic, The Goonies 30th anniversary Blu-ray is everything a stalwart Goonie fan could ever want, and everything the newbie Goonie fan will ever need - the transfer is fabulous, the extras are plentiful (the commentary by Richard Donner is worth the price of admission alone) and once you dive into this hi-def treasure trove you'll never want to come up for air.

Grab your shovels and dig up this piece of Goonies Blu-ray gold immediately! This is an incredible set that is guaranteed to take you to Goonies heaven!

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★★★ 10



ABSOLUTELY ANYTHING

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: TERRY JONES / SCREENPLAY: GAVIN SCOTT, TERRY JONES / STARRING: SIMON PEGG, KATE BECKINSALE, SANJEEV BHASKAR, ROB RIGGLE, EDDIE IZZARD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Neil (Simon Pegg) is – in his headmaster's own words – a 'feckless' schoolteacher who dreams of bigger and better things. His day-to-day is filled with his horrible class (10C), shopping, cycling to and from work, attempting to write a novel and lusting after Catherine, the girl downstairs (Kate Beckinsale). Then something out of this world happens that changes everything. Literally, everything.

Somewhere out in the cosmos, a small group of 'higher beings' have decided to destroy the Earth. They must first, however, run a test by selecting one human to have absolute power. What he does with that power will determine the planet's fate.

Hence, Neil is chosen at random (narrowly avoiding a few dodgy options including Justin Bieber) and, without knowing it, the test begins.

Things are a little confused at first. With a few poorly chosen words and the waft of his hand, children are mercilessly slain and there's a brief Shaun of the Dead moment. But eventually, Neil gets the hang of it and before long everything is working in his favour: the headmaster likes him, 10C are model pupils, and even Catherine is under his spell... but it doesn't last.

As Catherine's maniacal ex-boyfriend (Rob Riggle) discovers Neil's secrets, things will go from bad to worse before the aliens decide whether to wipe the Earth from existence or not. Will Neil manage to make the right decisions? Will the Earth be saved? Will anyone laugh more than a handful of times?

This film has excellent credentials. It's co-written and directed by Monty Python's Terry Jones, with his fellow Pythons lending their voices to the aliens, while the legendary Robin Williams does the same for Neil's dog, Dennis. The screen is literally packed with comedy stars, including Sanjeev Bhaskar, Eddie Izzard, Joanna

Lumley and Meera Syal. Yet none of this can save this from being anything other than a passable viewing experience.

Absolutely Anything's biggest problem is the director. While Jones has some writing and directing chops, those successes dwell firmly in the past, which is presumably why this film seems to do the same. The gags are old and predictable and the direction is on a par only with a BBC sitcom. It's obvious that the cast clearly did not accept their respective parts based on anything other than the chance to work with a Python.

Not without merit (the few jokes that work are laugh-out-loud moments and Pegg is always watchable), this movie struggles to be anything other than a universal disappointment that massively under-delivers on the promise of its cast, its crew and its concept.

Extras: Four featurettes / Cast and crew interviews

GRANT KEMPSTER

★★★★★ 4



VAMPYROS LESBOS (1971)

BD + DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: JESÚS FRANCO / SCREENPLAY: JAIME CHÁVARRI, JESÚS FRANCO, ANNE SETTIMÓ / STARRING: EWA STRÖMBERG, SOLEDAD MIRANDA, ANDRÉS MONALES, DENNIS PRICE / RELEASED: OUT NOW

Yeah, yeah, we know what you're thinking. But no, this German-Spanish horror film is not quite like that. Vampyros Lesbos is a poetic and dreamlike twist on Bram Stoker's classic tale. With an underwater scorpion, a talking kite and a lot of sex. Oh, who are we kidding? You were probably right the first time.

Linda (Ewa Strömberg) works for a Turkish legal firm called Simpson & Simpson (no, really) and sees Nadine (Soledad Miranda) doing a sexy nightclub act with a woman who looks like a mannequin but isn't (we think).

She's obviously impressed because she nibbles her lip a lot while she's watching it and, as far as we understand the rules of cinema, this means she's a bit turned on. Needless to say, Linda starts to have dreams about Nadine. As luck would have it, she's called to the island Nadine lives on (who turns out to be Countess Nadine Carody, so she's obviously a vampire) to make arrangements for her inheritance. Oooh, bit like Jonathan Harker then. Despite receiving warnings not to go from what turns out to be the

local psycho (Jesus Franco himself), she goes along anyway and a kite (repeatedly) calls her name. Seriously, there's an awful lot of that kite. She checks into the local hotel (without any luggage, we couldn't help but notice) and meets up with Nadine who obviously isn't one of those sunlight-fearing vampires as she likes to sunbath in a white bikini. Like all good business meetings, they start off with some skinny-dipping and then they have sex (Tod Browning obviously missed a trick there). And then it all gets a bit complicated. There's lots of dreamy-weirdness involving an underwater scorpion (no idea, sorry) and there's even a Doctor Seward (Dennis Price) just to give it a bit more Stokeresque authenticity. A bit unconvincing on that front, we're afraid. But there's a lot more sex and a soundtrack that makes you think you're in a 1970s curry house.

So you're probably wondering if all of this is any good [After that description? – Ed]. Actually, to be fair, you might not be wondering at all as you may well have made your mind up from the title. It's not a bad way of judging it. Vampyros Lesbos does indeed have an artsy beauty to it all and it's certainly dreamlike as long as

you're prepared to accept being a bit slow as part of the deal. But that probably isn't going to be quite enough to keep you entertained if the sight of Ewa Strömberg and especially Soledad Miranda going girl-on-girl isn't your thing. It has to be said that the very beautiful Miranda (who died in a car crash just a month after completing the film) is very much the star here even if Strömberg gets top billing. If you're a fan of Miranda, then you'll probably love this.

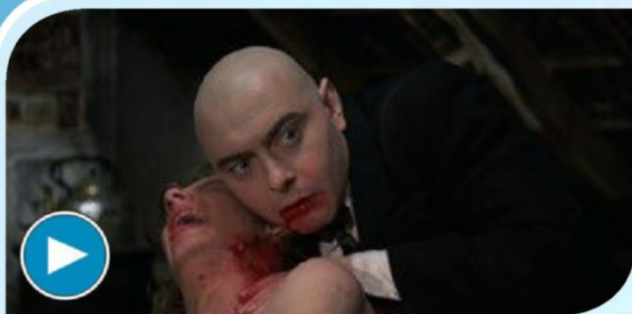
We still don't get the kite...

Extras: Interviews / German trailer / Opening titles

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★ 6





TENDERNESS OF THE WOLVES (1973)

BD + DVD DUAL / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: ULLI LOMMEL / SCREENPLAY: KURT RAAB / STARRING: KURT RAAB, JEFF RODEN, MARGIT CARSTENSEN, INGRID CAVEN, WOLFGANG SCHENCK / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Fritz Haarmann was the "Vampire of Hanover": a very scary serial killer who murdered at least 24 boys and young men (probably more) by *actually biting through their Adam's apple and trachea*. No weapons; just his teeth and maybe his hands. It's also suspected that many of his victims ended up being sold as horse meat on the black market. He was caught and executed by guillotine in 1925. Who needs horror movies, eh? Fritz Lang's

M (1931) was partly based on Haarmann (although mainly on the equally psychotic Peter Kürten), but the first movie to be completely dedicated to the Haarmann case was the Rainer Werner Fassbinder-produced *Tenderness of the Wolves*, written by and starring Kurt Raab. Arrow has done the Blu-ray honours.

The period has been changed to post-WWII, but the plot is reasonably close to the Haarmann story even

if Raab seems to have based his appearance on Peter Lorre (the star of M) rather than Haarmann himself. We see Haarmann pick up various young men either by using his position as a police snitch or through the gay community of which he is part. Through most of the movie we never get past the start of his (normally voluntary) sexual liaisons once back at his apartment. For the most part, Raab portrays him as an apparently sympathetic character who a few of his neighbours despise (for all the wrong reasons) while most respect despite his black market activities. Well, they sometimes get some meat off of him after all. Oh dear. There's also at least one disturbingly young boy he takes home who, mercifully, we see no more of. When we finally see Haarmann in the act of killing by biting a later victim, drinking his blood and then taking him to bed, it really is powerfully disturbing.

It looks good in HD, as this is actually a rather beautifully shot movie, which seems to add to the hidden horror of it

all. In just 82 minutes we go from mysterious banging in Haarmann's room to the almost unbelievable sight of him committing his crimes. When the police finally track him down, he's still driven to carry out his obsession as they're trying to take him away. He was charming but we knew what he was up to, yet the juxtaposition between that earlier image and the incomprehensible brutality we finally see is utterly compelling. The film also makes no attempts to explain why Haarmann does what he does and that's always best if you're trying to make an impact. Hollywood could never have resisted a movie-ruining trap like that.

Well worth checking out, this piece of New German Cinema is all the more chilling for being based on a true story.

Extras: Commentary by Ulli Lommel / Interviews / Trailer / Booklet

JOHN KNOTT

★★★★★★★★★ 8



SINISTER 2

BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: CIARÁN FOY / SCREENPLAY: C. ROBERT CARGILL, SCOTT DERRICKSON / STARRING: JAMES RANSONE, SHANNYN SOSSAMON, ROBERT DANIEL SLOAN / RELEASE DATE: DECEMBER 28TH

Back in 2012, Scott Derrickson's *Sinister* hit the big screen off the back of a wave of promotion and some promising looking chills. Thus it garnered a sizeable audience and became, alongside Oren Peli's *Paranormal Activity* and James Wan's *Insidious*, another film that was a calling card for its director and producers. We are all familiar with those trailers stating "from the makers of". The film was a fresh horror story and, while flawed, boasted some genuinely atmospheric scares, thanks mostly to the well-made "snuff" shorts intertwined in the film's paranormal narrative.

The film introduced us to the haunting Bughuul character - a literal bogeyman who ensnared children to do his murderous bidding. With this sequel, cursed with bad press and that feeling of cash grab, hopes were not particularly high. However, we are pleased to say that *Sinister 2* is a surprisingly effective sequel.

The action refocuses on a different family but much of the structure is the same, as troubled mother Courtney (Shannyn Sossamon) and her two sons Dylan (Robert Daniel Sloan) and Zach (Dartanian Sloan) try to escape their past. However, their current

hideaway home is "marked" by the insidious Bughuul (Nicholas King) and their only hope may be Ex-Deputy So & So (a returning James Ransone) who is still investigating what happened (in the last film) to the Oswald family. Despite that synopsis suggesting a strong tie with the first film, you don't really need to have seen it to get up to speed as the narrative is very similar. In many ways, while going overboard in many departments, this sequel is as good or perhaps slightly better structured than Derrickson's first film and director Ciarán Foy (*Citadel*) delivers doses of what made the first one work.

C. Robert Cargill and Derrickson's script does go off the rails slightly as the ghostly children step out of the darkness, but the Super 8 murder movies remain chillingly effective. Plus, the film does well to keep its genuinely scary Bughuul character mostly in the shadows where he should be. That being said, the film will deliver no real surprises to veteran genre fans and does draw occasionally from the boo horror jump scare playbook. Although the broadening of Bughuul's mythos is very well delivered, and in spite of the pantomime nature of certain moments, this sequel

retains its lingering power thanks to its core elements of grainy killing and its mysterious lead entity - a blend of a Slipknot drummer and the grim reaper.

All in all, *Sinister 2* is a fun Friday night horror film that has its fair share of strong moments and is boosted by likeable leads in Sossamon and Ransone. Ransone returns, broadening his character, and Sossamon's mother is stronger willed than most, a relationship is not forced between the two it just develops. Likewise, real life brothers Robert Daniel and Dartanian Sloan are effective as the onscreen youngsters and the characters are not annoying; the direction of the two thankfully forgoes a really obvious twist you think the film may be teasing. There are no real twists, however, in this sequel, just a simple story, reasonably well told, and while it will not rank as an *Evil Dead 2* or *[Rec] 2*-belting sequel, it is an enjoyable follow-up and restrains from the usual tedium that plagues most horror sequels. Critics have been a bit unfair to what is a well-acted and fun late night horror flick!

JACK BOTTOMLEY

★★★★★★★★★ 7



THE REFLECTING SKIN (1990)

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: PHILIP RIDLEY / STARRING: VIGGO MORTENSEN, LINDSAY DUNCAN, JEREMY COOPER, SHEILA MOORE, DUNCAN FRASER / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Seth Dove (Jeremy Cooper) is a small boy growing up in an unnamed part of the rural United States circa 1950. Seth's older brother is in the Navy, enjoying what their volatile mother naively calls "*the pretty islands*", Seth and his young friends, with nothing better to do, enjoy inflating bullfrogs and exploding them with their slingshots, tormenting the mysterious woman who lives close by, an English widow called Dolphin Blue (Lindsay Duncan) who Seth begins to suspect is actually a 200-year-old vampire.

After one of his friends is murdered and found in the water tank on Seth's family farm, suspicion falls upon Seth's father. The accusation also unearths a long-buried secret about the father that results in more tragedy for the little boy. Seth, however, is convinced the vampire is responsible. It isn't long before another of Seth's friends is killed.

When Seth's brother (Viggo Mortensen) returns home and falls in love with the vampire, Seth is certain that she is draining his life force. Surely that

can be the only reason Seth's brother is losing so much weight and his hair is falling out. No-one will believe Seth's stories, but it is his duty to stop the vampire once and for all. Could Dolphin Blue be innocent? Could the murders of children actually be linked to the strange youths roaming the dirt roads in their ominous black car?

British writer/director Philip Ridley created a genuine masterpiece in *The Reflecting Skin*. His film deserves much more acclaim than it ever received, and it has been very badly mistreated by past home video releases. Thankfully, with this new Blu-ray release it has been restored to its full glory. It is no exaggeration to say the film has never looked this good, not even in cinemas. What's more, this Blu-ray presentation comes fully loaded with features and interviews, two of Ridley's earlier short films and a fascinating commentary by the director.

The cinematography is exquisite, with some absolutely jaw-dropping shots of the cornfields, the clapboard farmhouses, the sun blazing down and the moon looming large and ominous as night falls. As for the performances,

Lindsay Duncan and Viggo Mortensen are both stand-outs, with Duncan being especially remarkable. *The Reflecting Skin* isn't for everybody and despite talk of vampires, it isn't a horror film. The pacing is slow, almost poetic, and much of the dialogue is quite theatrical (not surprising, considering that Ridley is also a playwright). The film also leaves us with as many questions as answers, and it is open to a myriad of interpretations. Unfortunately, without giving the ending away, we can't tell you our favourite one.

And as for the title? That is explained by Mortensen's character very late into the movie during a poignant conversation with Seth. The "*pretty islands*" weren't that pretty at all. They were Japan, at the exact moment America dropped the atomic bomb. It is cinema's loss that Philip Ridley has made so few films and our gain to have *The Reflecting Skin* back again and looking and sounding so perfect.

Don't miss this.

IAN WHITE

+++++10



ROBINSON CRUSOE ON MARS (1964)

BD + DVD DUAL / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: BYRON HASKIN / SCREENPLAY: JOHN C. HIGGINS, IB MELCHIOR / STARRING: PAUL MANTEE, VICTOR LUNDIN, ADAM WEST / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Fifty years before Matt Damon found himself growing potatoes and listening to funky '70s disco music during his enforced stay on the red planet in this year's brilliant *The Martian*, Paul Mantee was in a similar predicament in this classic 1960s sci-fi B-movie. But where Matt faced his predicament with a quip and a smile alongside the prospect of a long, hard struggle to stay alive, Mantee gets by

with the help of a monkey in a spacesuit, a convenient oxygen supply and a mute alien he names Friday – as you would. Oh, and he's also got to contend with an attack by alien spaceships fashioned out of the hoods of the 'tripods' in George Pal's version of *War of the Worlds*, which whoosh about the place spitting sparks as they try to root out their escaped alien captive. Never a dull moment on Mars...

A sticker on the cover of this welcome new budget-price Blu-ray rerelease proclaims "This film is scientifically authentic", but we're betting that runs about as far as depicting a Mars blessed with a potentially fatal rarefied atmosphere. Elsewhere, this is pure Techni-color 1960s cornball sci-fi, clunkily riffing off Defoe and boasting an array of imaginative special effects combining animation, matte paintings, modelwork and the odd bit of atmospheric location footage shot in the formidable Death Valley. Astronauts Commander Draper (Mantee) and Colonel McReady (Adam West) abandon their space vessel to avoid colliding with a meteoroid. Only Draper survives the descent down to the Red Planet's savage surface, and the beleaguered astronaut – with only flight-test monkey Mona for company – remains stoic and unflappable as he comes to terms with the Martian terrain in the desperate hope that a rescue mission will be launched from Earth. What kicks off as a slightly naïve and fanciful survivalist movie soon descends into pure space opera territory when Draper, driven to the point

of insanity by his enforced isolation, discovers alien slaves being forced to carry out Martian mining operations by hostile aliens, he then teams up with Friday (Victor Lundin) and travels through Mars' canals (the existence of which have long since been disproved) to escape the attentions of the aliens by taking refuge in the planet's polar icecap.

Robinson Crusoe on Mars is a product of its time, of course, and as such it's inevitably dated. But it remains an exciting Techni-color spectacular full of striking, vibrant imagery and ingenious effects, and the dour Mantee is a likeable, rootable leading man. Undoubtedly resurrected now because of the success of Ridley Scott's *The Martian*, this is a worthwhile companion piece that in its own way, is a bit of a minor landmark in the history of movie sci-fi.

Extras: Commentary / Trailer / Souvenir booklet

PAUL MOUNT

+++++7



FEAR THE WALKING DEAD – THE COMPLETE FIRST SEASON

BD + DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: VARIOUS / CREATORS: DAVE ERICKSON, ROBERT KIRKMAN / STARRING: KIM DICKENS, CLIFF CURTIS, FRANK DILLANE, ALCIA DEBNAM-CAREY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The most viewed programme in American cable history and applauded by critics and fans, *The Walking Dead* is an international phenomenon, and yet its hardy survivors have only just ventured out of Georgia. There's a whole lot of walker-infested territory to explore, and so a spin-off series was perhaps inevitable.

The six-episode first season of *Fear the Walking Dead* takes us to Los Angeles, back at the beginning of the outbreak (a time skipped over in the parent show due to Rick Grimes being in a coma). Madison Clark (Kim Dickens) is a high school counselor, her partner Travis (Cliff Curtis) a teacher – ordinary jobs in an ordinary world. And

then a suspicious flu outbreak closes the school, and Madison's junkie son believes he's seen a dead girl rise.

It's a slow-burning series, which may not be to everyone's tastes compared to the action-packed *Walking Dead*, but there's a lot to appreciate in the way it builds up paranoia and fear. Particularly interesting is the relationship between the civilians and the military, who set up camp in LA claiming to be protecting the people but become increasingly controlling and secretive – it's a trope that's been done in zombie fiction before, but one that works well here.

Where the series falters is in the characters of Madison, Travis, and their families, who aren't as well defined as they need to be, often acting out of character in order to serve the plot – who does what in several scenes is very interchangeable, giving away the poor construction. Kim Dickens, who was impressive in Ben Affleck's *Gone Girl*, is given particularly short shrift, with no clear arc to Madison's character and often finding herself sidelined in favour of the male characters.

At the heart of these problems is the decision to focus on one ordinary

family, meaning they end up crowded into plots; a more ensemble approach allowing us to spend more time with, for example, the doctors struggling to deal with the deluge of patients and the lower-ranked soldiers questioning their orders, could have given a more compelling look at the collapsing society. There are lots of good ideas in this world, but *Fear* fails to dig deeply into them.

Without giving too much away, this season ends with society much closer to post-apocalyptic chaos than when it started, and so it'll be interesting to see how *Fear* can continue to differentiate itself from its parent show (a fifteen-episode second season has already been commissioned). It'll certainly have to put more work into its characters, currently not strong enough to allow the show to reach the heights of *The Walking Dead*. But with its relatively short run, this first season has just enough for devout fans to appreciate the new angle into the popular world.

KIERON MOORE

★★★★★★★★★★ 6



CLOSELY OBSERVED TRAINS (1966)

BD + DVD DUAL / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JIRÍ MENZEL / SCREENPLAY: JIRÍ MENZEL, BOHUMIL HRABAL / STARRING: VÁCLAV NECKÁR, JOSEF SOMR, VLASTIMIL BRODSKÝ, VLADIMIR VALENTA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Closely Observed Trains, the directorial debut by Jirí Menzel, is one of the definitive films from the Czechoslovakian New Wave movement. A film blessed by the nuance of subtlety, Menzel's first picture is a bildungsroman tale set at a train station during the WWII Nazi occupation of

Czechoslovakia. The film isn't engrossed with the nature of war, though; *Closely Observed Trains* is more an exploration of human nature and interactions.

The narrative, adapted from a novella by Bohumil Hrabal, is one of relatively linear simplicity. Young Milos Hirma (Václav Neckár) takes a

job as a trainman at a remote railway station that acts as a direct pass-through for German trains hauling ammunition and supplies to aid the war effort. Milos is desperate to lose his virginity with a pretty conductor and prove he is a man, but there is one little problem: he suffers from premature ejaculation. This is pretty much the story of the film; Milos is trying his hardest to get some. Comically, sex is all around him – whether it be blatant like the carnal exploits of his co-worker Hubicka (Josef Somr) or in subtle visual metaphors like the phallic images of a woman stroking a goose's neck or the constant pulling of levers, the film is drenched with erotic undertones. This theme of sex isn't extraneous, though; the concept of sexual liberation is directly related to political liberation. The characters' attempts to be free and happy under the oppressive Nazi regime are evocative of the resistance movement. The interactions at the remote station can be seen as a microcosm of the war and

it is evident that the Czechs would much rather seek tail than help the Germans.

In essence, it is Menzel's superb characterisation that makes the film what it is, and by satirising much of the Nazi regime, the significance of the war in the plot is diminished in favour of a focus on these tender and genuine characters. Both humorous and touching, the film explores the beauty of ordinary people by utilising its minimalist milieu to focus on conversations between those few frequenting the station.

This provincial tale is an earthy comedy, shot in a restrained yet refined style that cleverly harnesses the occupation of Czechoslovakia as a lens through which to view human nature. Milos is a hero in the most unconventional of senses and only in a delicate film like *Closely Observed Trains* could this be achieved. An understated classic...

FORD MADDOX BROWN

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



CHARLIE CHAN AND THE CURSE OF THE DRAGON QUEEN (1981)

BD + DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: CLIVE DONNER / SCREENPLAY: STAN BURNS, DAVID AXLEROD / STARRING: PETER USTINOV, LEE GRANT, ANGIE DICKINSON, RICHARD HATCH, RODDY MCDOWALL, MICHELLE PFEIFFER / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Again mopping up one of the features that the likes of Arrow Video and Second Sight presumably didn't want, it's 101 Films' 'Cult' line to the dubious rescue, returning famous detective Charlie Chan to B-movie prominence. Hurrah? Well, maybe not...

Parody and homage at once, 1981's Charlie Chan and

the Curse of the Dragon Queen (the title is a misnomer, since there isn't one) was an attempt by Hollywood to revive the popular franchise (at its peak in the 1930s, when getting white people to play Chinese wasn't considered as racist as it so patently is). Except famous white man Peter Ustinov now plays Chinese detective Chan

here, in this updated version. But it's draped in ironic parody now, so it's fine, presumably (it's not fine).

In spite of the title, the real star of the show is Chan's idiot grandson Lee (Richard Hatch), who aspires to follow in his famous grandpa's footsteps. Rarely outside of *Some Mothers Do 'Ave Em* do we meet a figure so brainless as the pratfall-a-minute Lee, who is understandably hated by butler Gillespie (the excellent Roddy McDowall) and roughly everyone else he meets who isn't his inexplicable fiancée (Michelle Pfeiffer). By the time Ustinov's awful racist caricature arrives to give us a break, it's almost a relief. Almost. It's like a *Naked Gun* movie in tone, pace and energy, but without the jokes – just falling over.

In addition to the shameful attempts to be the next *Pink Panther*, there's a stylish, effective movie reminiscent of John Carpenter's legendary *Big Trouble in Little China* buried under here somewhere, but *The Curse of the Dragon Queen* never lets it out, save

for when its giallo-esque gloved killer is stalking about in the background. McDowall's sneering pomposity and Pfeiffer's adorable earnestness win the film a few points in its favour, while there are a couple of gags that do hit home (it's worth it for the joke with a dog and a candle alone), but beyond that, there's little to recommend. At least it looks pretty, on fully restored Blu-ray, but presented without any special features all you're getting is falling over in High Definition.

What strikes us here is that *Charlie Chan and the Curse of the Dragon Queen* is a movie that should have twice remained buried; the first time, when Clive Donner and his screenwriters were looking at resurrecting this franchise from the 1930s where it probably belongs, and the second, when the folk at 101 decided to rescue this rotten remake from obscurity.

JOEL HARLEY

★★★★★★★★★★ 4



SONG OF THE SEA

BD + DVD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: TOMM MOORE / SCREENPLAY: WILL COLLINS / STARRING: DAVID RAWLE, BRENDAN GLEESON, LISA HANNIGAN, FIONNULA FLANAGAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

This past year has been a true renaissance for animation, from *Inside Out* to *Big Hero 6* to *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, and with *Song of the Sea*, that rich ingenuity continues. After the disappearance of his mother, Ben, an adventure-seeker, is left on his own with his broken father and his young sister Saoirse, who he considers a nuisance. Saoirse is a 6-year-old who has never learned to speak and unintentionally causes Ben nothing but trouble, but in actuality, she is the last of the

Selkies, a race of women who can turn into seals. When her power is revealed, the siblings are drawn into the world of fairy folk, witches and magic – and Ben has to step up to keep his sister safe from harm.

Directed by Tomm Moore, who in the past had helmed the equally fabulous *The Secret of Kells*, *Song of the Sea* is a beautifully enchanting and wonderfully engrossing animation with genuine appeal for all ages. This year's Oscars' animation category saw it up against *Big Hero 6*, *The*

Boxtrolls and *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*, which just demonstrates that animation can be wonderfully diverse and enriching cinema outside the live-action filmmaking spectrum. In fact, whilst *Big Hero 6* was a worthy winner for the 'Best Animated Film' Oscar, this actually deserved that title much more.

Much like *The Secret of the Kells*, this is deeply rooted within Irish folklore, being a story that has these magical fantasy elements of Selkies, Faeries and Giants slipping in and out of a tale where we find these two young siblings being separated from their father and trying to find their way back home. The story in itself is cut from the same mould as Joseph Campbell's *Hero's Journey*, but that does not make the whole thing stale or formulaic, far from it. It is executed in a brilliantly engaging way, allowing us to become invested in the two children and how closely they bond with each other over the course of the film. The voice acting is superb, doing away with the clichéd reliance on Hollywood talent and getting in people whose voices match with the characters on screen. Even the soundtrack by Bruno Coulais is absolutely gorgeous

and very well fitted with that world and culture.

What the film certainly doesn't lack in is its artistic department, as the animation is very distinctive, absolutely beautiful to behold, resolutely 2D, heartbreakingly rendered, honest and truthful to the Celtic roots of the story, and is almost a character in and of itself. The spiralling landscapes and colour schemes feel very distinctive and clever in their usage, with the deep rich blue of the faerie world contrasting with the yellow/browns of the mainland. Its jaw-dropping visual style harks back to the painted hues of Studio Ghibli, containing elements of both Hayao Miyazaki's *Ponyo* and Isao Takahata's *The Tale of the Princess Kaguya*.

Song of the Sea is a genuine, heartfelt family film that will work across all age demographics, and everyone watching it will probably see something in it that'll stay with them long after the film has ended. It's a proper animated classic that'll stand the test of time and a real testament to animation's current golden age.

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 10

WE WANT TO BELIEVE...AGAIN

By Kieron Moore



THE X FILES
Miniseries Preview

There'll be very few people who Agents MULDER and SCULLY can trust when they face a new case this January. But you can rely on STARBURST to give you all the latest info on the revival of THE X-FILES...

Younger readers of this magazine may not realise just how big a phenomenon *The X-Files* was in the '90s. From 1993 to 2002, Chris Carter's take on the paranormal ran for nine seasons and, with a total of over two hundred episodes and a spin-off film, became the longest running American sci-fi series to that date (it's since been overtaken by *Stargate SG-1*). Following a pair of FBI Special Agents as they investigated an incredible array of unusual phenomena, the show's long-lasting appeal lied in the chemistry between David Duchovny's Fox Mulder and Gillian Anderson's Dana Scully – Mulder was the ardent believer in the extraterrestrial, while Scully was the sceptic out to prove him wrong, and their platonic relationship gradually developed into a romantic one. We left them, however, as fugitives on the run, with an alien invasion prophesied to take place ten years later, on December 22nd, 2012.

The 2008 movie *The X-Files: I Want to Believe* cleared their fugitive status, but failed to do anything about that ever-encroaching invasion (and also failed to be any good). Unfortunately, plans for a third movie to deal with that loose end came to nothing, meaning everyone in the *X-Files* universe must have let out a big sigh of relief when they woke up cosy and intact come December 23rd that year. It took until the beginning of 2015 for Mulder and Scully's return to be announced – not as a movie, but as a TV miniseries.

The ☿-Team

Earlier this year, Duchovny and Anderson reunited on set in Vancouver to film six new episodes, set to air in January. But they're not in the same place that *I Want to Believe* left them; the couple have split up, and Mulder's life is in disarray. What he needs is a good bit of paranormal investigation to kick things back into gear...

This all comes along when former alien abductee Sveta, played by *The Americans'* Annet Mahendru, goes missing, a case that is brought to Mulder's attention via conservative Internet news anchor Tad O'Malley (*Community's* Joel McHale). It's not long before the former Special Agent gets on the phone and ropes his ex, Scully (now working as a medical doctor), back into the fold. But the two being back in action together won't necessarily be a fix-all for their relationship – O'Malley, like all the teenage boys in the '90s, develops a crush on Scully, and Mulder, who's not over the break-up, isn't exactly keen on a new love interest being in the picture.

But who else will be drawn into this conspiracy? Mitch Pileggi, having since appeared in *Stargate Atlantis* and *Sons of Anarchy*, reprises his supporting role as Mulder and Scully's old boss, FBI Assistant Director Walter Skinner. Though he was often antagonistic,



Skinner was last seen on the side of our heroes, so they'll most likely be bringing him in on their investigation. FBI Agent Monica Reyes (Annabeth Gish), who was a lead character in the show's ninth season, is also set to return, if only briefly. Robert Patrick, however, will not be returning as Agent John Doggett, preferring to stick to new roles over returning to old ones – he's currently starring in tech thriller series *Scorpion*.

On the shadier, smokier side of the cast list is William B. Davis – yes, despite seemingly dying in 2002's finale, *The Smoking Man* is back. He was Mulder's arch-nemesis and an agent of the government/alien conspiracy known as the Syndicate, and is undoubtedly up to something equally sinister this time. Fan favourites the Lone Gunmen, a trio of conspiracy theorists, are also returning for at least one episode, as is Scully's mother Margaret, played by Sheila Larken.

All is not what it seems... again

The original series was known for its mix of episodes following the major conspiracy story (known as 'mytharc' episodes to fans) and standalone 'monster of the week' episodes; despite its shortened run, this revival will follow a similar format, with the first, fifth, and sixth episodes dealing with a major conspiracy and the other three treating us to good old single-episode cases.

Behind these stories are much of the same talent fans are familiar with; series creator Chris Carter returns to write and direct episodes one, four, and six, while fellow *X-Files* alumni Glen Morgan, Darin Morgan and James Wong are doing the same for the other three (that other *X-Files* writer Vince Gilligan is apparently busy with his own shows now... something about drugs and lawyers and New Mexico).

Carter has expressed an intention for these new stories to tie in with the big changes in the political landscape since the show's last season, with the trailer hinting at military drones and digital surveillance playing a part

in the conspiracy Mulder and Scully are drawn into – Mulder observes that what seems like “an attack on America by terrorists or Russia” could in fact be “driven by a well-oiled well-armed multi-national group of elites using alien technology the government has been hiding for seventy years”. Cue iconic whistling theme...

Oh, and that 2012 invasion that didn't happen? Carter's said he'll address it in some way. You'll have to watch to find out how.

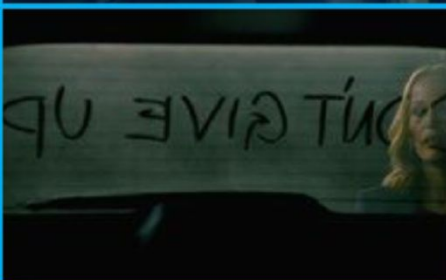
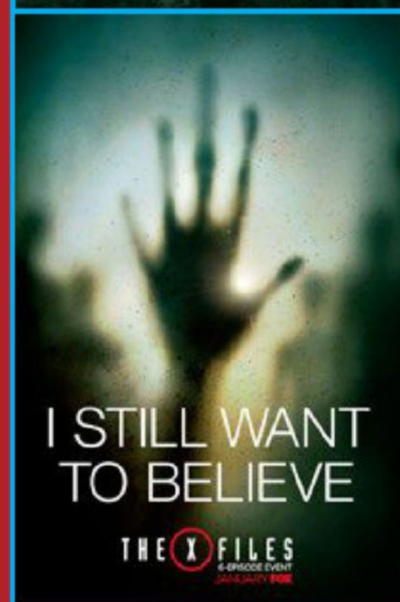
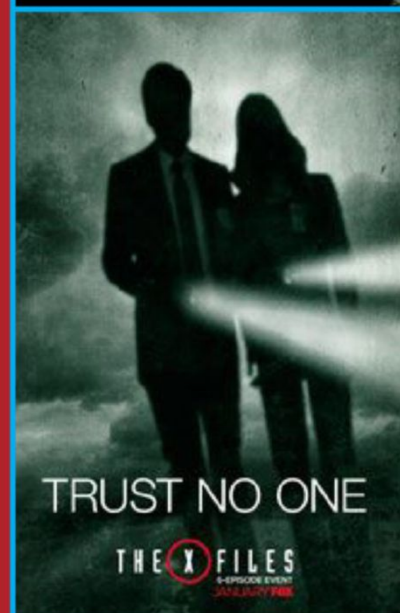
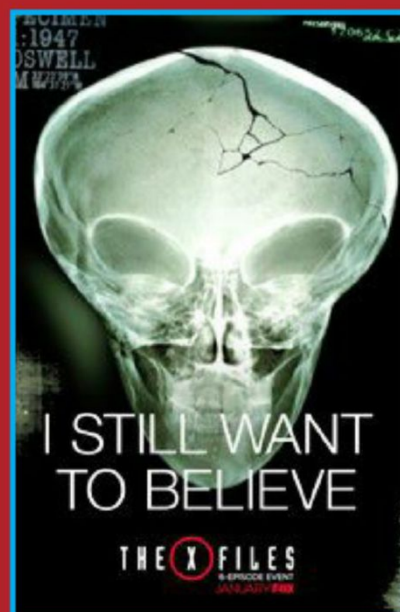
Re-opened

It looks good: Mulder and Scully are back, as are several of the show's most-loved supporting characters, in episodes written and directed by the same team who made the original show so popular. As TV revivals go, *The X-Files* is in with a chance of being one of the ones worth watching – whether you're a fan of the old or a newcomer. Though Duchovny and Anderson are unlikely to commit to a longer season, they've both expressed interest in continuing the story through further miniseries should this one do well. So open your mind to the potential of the paranormal, question everyone and everything you meet, and don't forget to reunite with Mulder and Scully this January.



THE X-FILES miniseries premieres on January 24th on FOX in the US. A UK date is yet to be announced.





BRAND X

By Rod McCance



As the new X-FILES series begins in the US in January, we take the opportunity to look back on the seminal series that, at one time, ruled the airwaves...

In 1993, Fox changed the course of television by introducing us to *The X-Files*. Spanning nine years, nine series, two hundred and two episodes and two movies, *The X-Files* became a pop culture phenomenon. It had countless spin-offs including TV series *The Lone Gunmen*, books and comic books, including a 25-issue series 'Season Ten'. It was also responsible for Fox's first ever Emmy nomination, and created numerous imitators, influencing television for a generation and giving opportunities to writers like Vince Gilligan (*Breaking Bad*) and Alex Ganza (*Homeland*). *The X-Files* was one of the first television shows that used the Internet to expand its audience and dealt with themes of spirituality, mortality, and paranoia.

Starting off as a small cult hit that Fox took a chance on, the show's reach and growth quickly expanded into a worldwide

pop culture juggernaut. Everyone seemed to know the phrase 'The Truth Is Out There'; the exploits of and relationship between agents Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) became household news. Both of the actors were catapulted to stardom in the wake of the show. Carter has said that Duchovny had a terrific audition and was his first choice for the role of Fox Mulder, though it took a significant amount of time for Anderson to get the role. Anderson wasn't the first choice of the studio, as they were eager for more of a 'bombshell', hoping that romance would develop between the two leads. At Carter's insistence, then off-Broadway theatre actor Anderson was cast as Dana Scully and gained one of her first roles in front of the camera as a lead on a television show. She would go on to star in more shows such as *The Fall* and *Hannibal* and in movies like *The Last King of Scotland*, *The Mighty Celt* and *Robot Overlords*. While Duchovny would also find comfort in another television show on *Californication*, his film career stuttered. Apart from a famous appearance in *Zoolander* as a hand model, Duchovny has always struggled to find the right roles on the big screen, *Evolution* being a particular huge disappointment for him. Now Duchovny stars in new show *Aquarius*, where he plays an LAPD Detective searching for a missing girl.

"It's a complete learning experience for me – the pilot was only the second time I'd been in front of a camera" Anderson said in an interview in 1994. She was clearly the right choice for the role imbuing Scully with a quiet determination and confidence. Dana Scully was a progressive character, all the way back in 1994. She was quick to fight against her male superiors in the FBI and her resilience and intelligence makes her one of the most iconic characters in sci-fi and all of TV. Anderson brought Scully's depth and contradictions to life. Even though she is a lapsed Catholic, she still clings to her faith too easily, all the while being so closed-minded to the paranormal that her partner is so quick to believe in. The contradictions were things that *The X-Files* wore on its sleeve. It was a show about the paranormal, occult and horrifying, but yet it was equally a show about faith, humanity, and human relationships. Scully's battle with cancer is a particularly affecting portrayal of someone battling the disease and something quite unexpected for a sci-fi television show.

You can't imagine anyone else as Fox 'Spooky' Mulder other than David Duchovny. He gave Mulder a soft spoken stoicism, and brought out flaws to the character but still made you want to believe him. Carter once said, *"It was*



David who pointed out correctly that if he were a nerd with pocket mechanical-pencil protectors, you wouldn't be interested. But a smart, educated, perfectly sane guy can get you to believe outrageous things". Mulder is perfectly rational, yet obsessive, cynical yet quick to believe. Duchovny brings out all these contradictions and what makes him even more interesting is his past. Robert Patrick (who replaced Duchovny as the male lead in Season Eight) once said Anderson and Duchovny's on-screen chemistry as 'once in a lifetime'.

Inspired by shows like *The Twilight Zone*, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and *Alfred Hitchcock Presents*, *The X-Files* took its concepts seriously and developed its own style of television show. It was a complete revolution in television. Blending the genres of paranormal, horror, sci-fi, and procedural show, *The X-Files* anchored itself on the relationship between Mulder and Scully. It almost seems pointless to even say it, because everyone knows Mulder wanted to believe in the paranormal, while Scully was the sceptic. While at first, the relationship is platonic and professional between the two, romantic feelings develop as the series goes on and everything was believable. *The X-Files* inverted the science fiction stereotypes of the woman as the

believer and the man the sceptic by giving Scully a certain cynicism and making her relatable to the audience. Scully looks at everything logically, while Mulder is quick to see anything as proof of extraterrestrial or paranormal life, and although Mulder was quick to indulge in those thoughts, Scully's lucidity offered him the anchor he needed. It was this relationship that grounded all the ideas that Carter had. Even with a shadow government conspiracy, shape shifting men, and alien abductions you could still believe in the characters and that made you believe everything else.

Starting off in Season One, *The X-Files* developed its own style, inventing TV tropes in the process. As a show, *The X-Files* introduced monster of the week episodes as part of the TV landscape. Of course, these episodes were common in shows before, such as *The Twilight Zone*, but *X-Files* defined them. Standing alongside these episodes were the 'mytharc' episodes, which would define the mythology of the show beginning with flashbacks to Mulder being abducted as a child. Carter described the idea of the mythology episodes as "something that was instinctual, but not necessarily a conscious decision. When we saw that the stories about Mulder and Scully were best told through the mythology — that they

were more personal — it gave the show an emotional grounding, that I think the mythology of a show does". The combination of the MOTW episodes and the mythology episodes redefined how television was viewed and perceived, and ultimately, how it would be made.

The X-Files was one of the most expensive television shows in the 1990s and with good reason. The success of the show was a combination of many things, but its movie-like tone, iconic imagery and incredible soundtrack helped develop the feel and style of the show. *The X-Files* took its inspiration from many films, most notably *The Silence Of The Lambs* (there are many similarities between Scully and Clarice Starling — Carter even goes as far to say that Starling was an inspiration for Scully). Then there is the influence of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* with its visual effects and style. In the very first episodes, Mulder jokes as he knocks on Scully's door that he is Steven Spielberg — a clear indication of his influence on Carter. Another of Spielberg's influences can be seen at the end of the pilot episode where series antagonist The Smoking Man walks through a giant warehouse in the Pentagon and hides the only evidence of the abduction in this place. The scene is reminiscent of the warehouse at the end of *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. The size and

The Xcellent Files: The 10 Best X-Files Episodes

Honourable mentions: *X-Cops*, *Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose*, *Triangle*, *Ice*, *Piper Maru*, *The Post Modern Prometheus*.

#10 The Springfield Files (The Simpsons Season Eight, Episode Ten)

So we're cheating... sorry, but *The Springfield Files* is simply *The Simpsons* at its satirical best. Here Mulder and Scully are sent to Springfield to investigate Homer's extraterrestrial sighting. It's perhaps one of the funniest *Simpsons* episodes, the performances of Duchovny and Anderson are incredible, and both Mulder and Scully translate ridiculously well in to characters in *The Simpsons*. The absurdity of the episode combined with the guest stars just works perfectly and it is a testament to the cultural reach of both shows that the crossover worked so well.



#9 Beyond the Sea (Season One, Episode Thirteen)

After the death of her father in Season One, we see the sceptic/believer dynamic turned on its head as Scully becomes the believer. It's completely all about Anderson and it's her first (of many) heart wrenching episodes, showing just how much depth she has as a performer. It is also our first real emotional connection to her. In *Beyond the Sea*, psychic death row inmate Luther Lee Boggs (played by a mesmerising Brad Dourif) attempts to help Scully reconnect with her recently deceased father. Although it received a mediocre Nielsen rating compared to other first season episodes, it was the first episode to explore father figures, a recurring theme of *The X-Files*.



#8 One Breath (Season Two, Episode Eight)

When we discuss *The X-Files*, we forget just how much emotion the show managed to gather for its characters and it is here in the culmination of a multi-episode story arc that we see just how emotional *The X-Files* could be. Scully is found comatose in a hospital (after her abduction) and we are introduced to her mother. What develops is a battle of science vs. spirituality as Margaret Scully wants Dana to be allowed to die peacefully, while Mulder does not want to give up on her. This episode explores the core themes and puts the conspiracies to the back burner while focusing on the human relationships and emotions that connect us. The episode is also one of the first episodes in which we see Skinner come to prominence and develop as a character.



#7 Musings of a Cigarette Smoking Man (Season Four, Episode Seven)

In this episode, *The X-Files* explores the backstory of the Cigarette Smoking Man. While we aren't ever completely sure if what we are seeing is the truth or not, the episode is a complete departure from what we had seen before. It also drops numerous hints at the wider mythology and features an appearance by Bill Mulder and *Deep Throat*, giving us a glimpse at the past. While lurking mysteriously and dangerously in the background of many episodes, this really gave us a taste of how hazardous the Cigarette Smoking Man could be to Mulder, Scully and the entire world.



#6 Drive (Season Six, Episode Two)

Along with *X-Cops*, this is Vince Gilligan's finest hour on *The X-Files*. Pre-*Breaking Bad* and even pre-*Malcolm in the Middle*, Brian Cranston delivers a superb guest starring role as Patrick Crump and his relationship with Mulder is what makes the episode special. Cranston brings a quiet humanity to his role as the anti-Semitic, trapped Crump. It's the interplay between the two that makes it one of the best episodes; obviously it gets more attention now because of what Cranston and Gilligan would go on to do, but the *Speed*-inspired episode remains one of the best Monster of the Week stories. It also makes great use of the location switch (*The X-Files* moved from filming in Canada to California in Season Six) and there is amazing scenery and sound design.



#5 Pilot (Season One, Episode One)

Has there ever been a more confident and assured television pilot? Probably not. *The X-Files* bounded onto screens with tales of paranoia, conspiracies and two of the most compelling characters on TV. Mystery, dry humour, and aliens. *The X-Files* pretty much had everything. It introduced everything that the show would become famous for. The only exception is that Skinner is nowhere to be seen. Cigarette Smoking Man appears and is one of the most menacing silent characters ever created at this point. The cinematic production values and slick editing are so assured that you'd think this was halfway through Season Two. *X-Files* started off so confidently that it set the bar for other pilots such as *Lost*, *Fringe* and many others influenced by it.



#4 Home (Season Four, Episode Two)

A really, really disturbing tale of the Peacock Family. While the emotion was often underrated in *The X-Files*, another thing that often gets overlooked is just how much the show can make your skin crawl. The personification of the American Dream? The episode was so gruesome that future broadcasts received a viewer discretion warning. Home remains one of *The X-Files* most bone chilling episodes. From the satirical and horrifying opening to the brutal finale in which Mulder and Scully journey through the Peacocks' booby-trapped house, *The X-Files* managed to tap in to the core values of the American Dream and ask if it really is dead.



#3 Paper Clip (Season Three, Episode Two)

Before *The X-Files* mythology became a convoluted mess, *Paper Clip* tied together a whole bunch of story threads and cliffhanger from the previous series. Here Mulder and Scully are running for their lives, but they bring together the *Paper Clip* programme, Mulder's family history and Roswell. Here we learn more about the Syndicate and the stakes of Mulder and Scully's investigations are truly explored. In the episode we are invited to focus on Scully, who also loses her sister and is finding out just what Mulder has gotten them in to. It is here that Skinner starts to develop even more into an incredible character, standing up to the bureaucracy and the Cigarette Smoking Man. It's one of the most intense episodes and features some of *The X-Files*' most beautiful imagery, including that shot of Mulder staring up at the space ship.



#2 731 (Season Three, Episode Ten)

The episode that led director Rob Bowman to direct the feature film of *The X-Files*. The episode sees Mulder and Scully split up, leading to amazing results. A mythology episode that sees Mulder become an action hero on a speeding runaway train and Scully investigate a mysterious chip in her neck. It is a fantastic, breakneck episode of television and rarely is *The X-Files* so action-packed. Filled with iconic imagery, this is an episode that shows just how grand and ahead of its time it was.



#1 Squeeze (Season One, Episode Three)

Eugene Victor Tombs. The first Monster of the Week episode of *The X-Files* is perhaps the most iconic. Tombs was an integral villain in establishing the MOTW episodes. A shape-shifting serial killer who hibernates for 30 years in-between kills, with a love for human organs, Tombs is the first to put Mulder and Scully in real danger. Even with the amazing Tombs, the episode is balanced out by Scully having to choose between careerism and protecting her new partner Mulder. A young(ish) Donal Logue appears as an old colleague of Scully's. It's a perfect episode and not only does it have a terrifying and iconic monster, it explores the themes of investigative methods, truth, and the role of the FBI.



scope of *The X-Files* meant that it was miles ahead of its television counterparts at the time. *The X-Files* was one of the first shows to have a filmic look, it felt more like a movie, than a TV show.

Of course, *The X-Files* would go on to appear as two feature films, the first *The X-Files* (also known as *The X-Files: Fight the Future*) was released in 1998 at the height of its popularity, between Season Five and Season Six. The second *The X-Files: I Want to Believe*, appeared 10 years later in 2008 after the show had finished. The two films couldn't be more different; while the first focuses on expanding the wider mythology of the series, *I Want to Believe* works as a standalone, monster of the week thriller. *The X-Files* was met with very positive reviews, while *I Want to Believe* was met with more mixed reviews.

Chris Carter (a former editor of *Surfing Magazine*) began his television career working on television movies for Walt Disney Pictures. He worked on several pilots that were never picked up and had several pitches to networks rejected. He developed *The X-Files* out of his childhood love for *The Twilight Zone* and *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*. He also took the conspiracy element from growing up with the Watergate Scandal. He developed the series over a number of



years and pitched it twice before it was accepted. Fox granted \$2 million dollars to film a pilot episode in Vancouver, British Columbia. After a screening of the first episode for Fox executives, even Fox head Rupert Murdoch was a fan according to Carter, "I've had very little contact with him, but the first thing he ever said to me was I like your TV shows". When it aired on Fox, at the

then-dreaded Friday night time slot, the pilot gained a Nielsen rating of 7.9 which was considered a

huge success. The show was greeted with positive reaction from viewers and critics alike, praising the performances, setting, tone, and themes. *The X-Files* would be broadcast on Friday nights until three episodes in to Season Five and would finish out the rest of its lifespan on Sundays.

Of course, David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* (in which Duchovny plays another memorable FBI Agent) is an inspiration for what we now see as our second Golden Age of television as it rivals (and maybe even surpasses) the cinema in terms of quality. *The X-Files* certainly helped with the growth and was a forerunner in the first Golden Age (along with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and others). With many episodes featuring special effects, the show was extremely important in increasing the time and budget spent on television shows. In 1997, Fox decided to air episode 4.13 *Leonard Betts* after the Superbowl. They felt that if they had shown episode 4.12 *Never Again* (which was originally going to be directed by Quentin Tarantino before conflicts forced him to drop out) it would alienate new viewers. The Monster of the Week episode *Leonard Betts* became the most watched episode of the entire series being watched by 29.1 million people. Before DVD sales, syndication was crucial and the

shows could be screened in any order the network chose. *The X-Files* was largely responsible for the shift in the programmes being viewed in sequential order. The whole purpose of the mytharc episodes of the series was to be watched as one gradual mystery - a move that would be reflected in many TV shows for years to come such as *Fringe*, *Lost*, and *Battlestar Galactica*.

In the 1990s, the Internet was in its infancy. As the show (and its conspiracies) developed, online fan communities and forums would quickly start to grow and mirror the growth of the show. Rabid, cult fans were nothing new, but this time these fans could easily discuss the shows online, developing theories and writing fan fiction. These things we take for granted today and discussion on social media is all too common but back in the '90s, *The X-Files* was a revolutionary show. It wasn't so much the creators that developed the fan base, but a case of the fans taking it into their own hands and embracing it. Something many shows would kill for today. The show itself would often feature names of fans as characters or in other ways. It was a radical approach, it almost seems like destiny that the show would question authority and conspiracies at the same time that a tool that would help (and





hinder) those very things was coming to the forefront of modern technology and revolutionising our lives. In one episode, writers introduced a character named Leyla Harrison – Harrison was the name of a popular fan fiction writer who had recently passed away. This sort of interaction between online communities and creators is something many television shows strive for in the modern age of Twitter, Facebook and other social media.

Of course, not all of *The X-Files'* influence is positive. Something dubbed 'The Chris Carter Effect' has become a common phrase for a television show that becomes so convoluted in its plot and mythology. Examples that many cite often include *Heroes*, *Lost*, *The 4400*, *Battlestar Galactica*, and *Smallville*. Many complaints of the Carter Effect are that shows don't follow up plot points, lack of resolution of smaller subplots that are often forgotten about, twists for no reason, and a general feeling that the series doesn't have a direction. *The X-Files* no doubt changed how we view TV, but its legacy remains a muddled, confused, and unfocused story that will really never be completed. However, the mytharc inspired modern television. The combination of procedural and long form caused a shift in the viewing habits and narrative that television used. The

X-Files legacy might not be the show itself, but what the show did for the storytelling art form of television.

In a modern age, *The X-Files* would be a 13-episode series. In the 1990s, there were over 24 episodes in a series. It seems like an impossible task to tie together long form storytelling and standalone episodes. *The X-Files* tried, and it changed TV because of it, but it wasn't always successful with its narrative. Most shows are developed with a destination at least season by season, whereas *The X-Files* never had that. A perfect example is the significant changes in details of Mulder recounting his sister's abduction in Season One and Two. Though it could be seen that Mulder's recounting plays in to the themes of memory loss and paranoia, even in these early stages the show loses footing. As the seasons progressed, the mythology would expand in to a confusing mess and many fans would be left disappointed.

Despite being a worldwide phenomenon, *The X-Files* was inherently American. Doused in post-Watergate/Cold War paranoia, *The X-Files* told us to 'trust no one'. It had a very heavy *All the President's Men* vibe and the shadowy government and conspiracies all tied together to create a sense of secrecy and

dread for the duo of Mulder and Scully. The truth and trust were two core themes of the show and the balance between the two was often blurry. The monsters of the week, aliens and everything else were scary, sure, but what was even scarier was what it said about what the government was keeping from us.

Of course, no discussion of *The X-Files* would be complete without discussing the theme. One of the most iconic themes (and television intros) of all time. On a DVD extra of Season One, Mark Snow, the composer, says he was frustrated after Carter told him it wasn't quite ready. Snow slammed his fist down on the keyboard and the famous echo effect was born and the theme was complete. Never has a theme summed up the spooky, horrifying themes the show explores so well - perfect for the show and the title sequence. The single version even hit #2 on the UK Singles Chart.

In 2016, *The X-Files* makes a comeback for a six episode mini-series. How will it compare when it stands beside so many shows that wear its influence on its sleeve? Can it fit back in to the television landscape? Perhaps it's more relevant than ever and it is only fair that one of the most influential television shows of all time gets one last run in another Golden Age of television.



The Merch is Out There

By Jack Bottomley

STARBURST looks back at some of the odd, cool, and somewhere in-between merchandise inspired by *The X-Files*...

There's a weird feeling in the air, can you sense it? It is a feeling of unease, a feeling of unexplainable activity, a feeling of romanticism between paranormal investigators. That's right, the show with the spookiest music this side of *Doctor Who* is finally back. The question fans asked every time David Duchovny and Gillian Anderson so much as popped down to the supermarket for a sandwich has finally got an answer. After ending its TV run in 2002 and spawning two unusual big screen feature adaptations, Chris Carter's *The X-Files* is now properly back for a six-part miniseries on Fox. So ahead of the famous agency double act's return to the realm of the entertainingly odd, freaky and cultish, we take a look back at some of the merchandise that *The X-Files* has inspired. From Fox Interactive's *The X-Files: Unrestricted Access* and Wesco's luminous wall clock to official staff business cards, the merch is indeed out there. Still, with a fanbase this feverish and content this unusual, we were unsure what we would find, or whether we would ever be the same again...



The X-Files Action Figures (1998, McFarlane Toys)

The McFarlane X-Files toy line was not what you would call expansive; in fact they only made eleven figures, ten of which were merely repackaged with the odd tweak (a new accessory and what not) for later releases. Included in the range were variations of Agent Mulder and Agent Scully, Attack Alien & Primitive Man and Fireman figures. The figures were sought after, due to a perfect storm of the show's popularity and the range being released to coincide with the 1998 feature film *The X-Files* (also known as *Fight The Future*). Consequently, they sold fast, with many praising the likenesses to the characters. Today the figures are quite the little collectable for the X-Phile out there; our personal favourite is the last McFarlane release - the fantastic McFarlane club exclusive Flukeman figure, but more on that charming fellow later...



X-Files Evidence Box (2002, Fox)



Every franchise, series, or saga has one merchandising magnum opus; one piece of kit that is so rare it may as well be on the endangered species list. These items can be so extraordinary that they are one-offs; well this 'Evidence Box' isn't a one-off per se, but it might be easier to get the syndicate to go public than it would be to get your hands on one of these, although it is worth the effort. The 'Evidence Box' is an eloquently packaged collection of items, and was presented to producers of the show by Fox come the end of the final series. The box contained bagged evidence props - replicas of key items from major narrative arcs of the show over the years. As well as that, there was an assortment of items including: an alien fetus in a jar (remember those kinds of toys, '90s kids?), a mug, a keychain, numerous other props, a CD, and much more. We know at least one of these ended up at Los Angeles' Comikaze Expo in October 2011 and we want to believe that more will find their way to a merch stall or convention near you... cue ominous music.

X-Files Candle Holder (2015, Glassola)

There's a light in the sky... wait, sorry our bad, it's just our X-Files Candle Holder in the bedroom window. Yes indeed, the show may have been the light of your weekly viewing but this is stretching that metaphor a bit far. This quite cute little hand-crafted, painted-glass candleholder is decorated with extraterrestrial images (including one of 'the Greys') indebted to the show, as well as the noticeable figures of Mulder and Scully. They are made by Glassola and sold through Etsy.



Mulder & Scully Barbie & Ken Dolls (1998, Mattel)



Barbie and Ken are two names that either conjure playful images of your youth or fiery and hateful feelings of disgust. Either way, Mattel's iconic toy couple are known to all. But where they usually wear flamboyant pink gear, they received a professional upgrade in 1998 with Mattel's X-Files tie-in duo doll pack. Barbie and Ken took the parts of Scully and Mulder respectively - although you could swap outfits if that's your bag - in what has to be one of the more unexpected ways to celebrate the release of the aforementioned 1998 film adaptation. Considered more limited nowadays, this strange doll set has undeniable appeal. As does seeing Barbie and Ken replace Anderson and Duchovny for just one episode of the show - think about it, it'd be a hoot! Barbie: "Oh my God, Ken. It smells like... I think its bile". Ken: "Is there any way I can get it off my fingers quickly without staining my Hawaiian shirt accessory?" Barbie and Ken could defo kick that Chinga Doll's ("I Want to Play") ass!

Bookmark & Wallet Card Set (1996, Antioch)

Things can, in the words of Dr Evil, 'get weird' when it comes to *The X-Files*, so the odd ordinary item is a welcome sight and this nifty Bookmark and Wallet set from Antioch fits the bill. Considered quite a rare vintage item (the '90s is now vintage? Excuse us while we weep) nowadays, this set of stickers, wallet cards, and bookmarks are decorated with suitably creepy and cryptic imagery from the show and were a nice little promotional extra found in UK video stores back in 1996.



Signed Candy Dispensers (1998, Jay)



Now for oddities, you need look no further than these X-Files candy dispensers that have found their way onto eBay, and for not bad prices! Hand crafted by artist Jay for sci-fi conventions, these dispensers are based on the popular PEZ Candy dispensers but are unconnected to the company. They are not even actual candy dispensers, so much as artistic curio products signed by the artist himself. Originally creating Flukeman and Alien designs, before adding Mulder and Scully to his range, these are unique and an unquestionably eccentric, yet strangely appropriate, way to celebrate *The X-Files*.

The X-Files Flukeman Film Cel (1997, 20th Century Fox)

It was no fluke that we mentioned that villainous ol' arse mouth earlier in this feature, because the Flukeman is one of the series' most iconic creations. Part-parasite, part-man, part-Chernobyl-created monster, the sewer-dwelling Flukeman may be disgusting and creepy but was a star turn in the acclaimed *The Host* (Season Two, Episode Two). So Fox released this cool 35mm Special Edition Film Cel that really is too stool for school. Y'know, because he dwells in the sewers? No? OK, sorry, we were just trying to make sure this feature wasn't bog standard... OK we'll stop now.



X-Files Boxer Shorts (2015, Fox)

Over at the official *X-Files* section at the online Fox shop there are all manner of shirts and bags but as this is a series about the hidden truth, the biggest lie appears to be these *X-Files* boxer shorts that are not all they are cracked up to be. In fact, they are a little short by conventional boxer short standards. Still, at least you have a fine looking *X-Files* logo design; just try and cover your X-rated areas as best you can!



Catnip (2015, Etsy)



At what point does fandom become *too much*? Well over at Etsy you will find the answer to that question for every popular TV/film property. In the case of the *X-Files*, some might say that point has come with this handmade catnip, which is inspired by the infamous 'I Want to Believe' poster from the show. Though as catnip based on popular science fiction TV shows/films go, this is quite cute and likely to drive your kitty nuts, to the point that they 'Trust No One'. You thought we were going to make a pussy joke there, didn't you? We are nowhere near that crude... we'll leave that to the erotic fan fiction.

Baby Bottles (2001, Fox)

In gathering unusual merchandise for anything, you often find yourself confronted by joke items; for instance, we came across the 'Dana Skully' (hey, we do the puns here!) prop skull, complete with 'realistic' hair, and 'I Want to Beekeep' beekeepers beginners set (the box saying David Duchovny not included was the giveaway), but other times you find that these outrageous items actually exist! Enter these promotional baby bottles from Fox that were promoting the Season Eight finale, which would resolve the Scully pregnancy arc. They are extremely rare nowadays and anyone owning all 3 might want to lock them away from the prying eyes of fellow X-Philes. 'Is it a boy?' 'Is it a Girl?' 'Is it an alien?' Boy, oh boy, it is bloody odd writing these merch pieces sometimes!



Fax Modem (1996, NetComm)



This Australian *X-Files* Fax Modem was limited edition back in 1996 and has only grown in its rarity over the years. The box boasts all manner of high speeds (33,600bps data speed, if you please), Internet access (wow) and all manner of other unique capabilities. This bad boy was only available for members of the *X-Files* fan club and is a unique example whereby faxing is made slightly more interesting. As odd as it sounds, at least this merchandise tie-in makes sense, what with Mulder and Scully doing their fair share of office work. The truth is out there and it was easier than ever to find with this fax-enabling technology... Windows 10, Windows schmen!



The Abducted Smoking Alien (1997, Randy Bowen)

In terms of age, *The X-Files* is nowhere near as old as some other franchises thus finding highly priced and sought-after collectables is not as common as with other popular TV shows and film merchandise. However, this Randy Bowen sculpted and signed 10" statue bucks the trend. The statue is of the smoking grey alien, which featured in Jose Chung's *From Outer Space* (Episode Twenty, Season Three). The episode is commonly listed on many best of *X-Files* lists for its more comedic tone, so it is only appropriate that one of the best episodes gets a fantastic, if limited (only 3,000 were made), piece of merchandise. Plus the statue shows us why Greys are the colour they are - all those cigarettes! Someone is in need of an intervention.





Autographed Scooter (1999, Razor)

It seems rather appropriate that this list has consisted of many rarities; after all, this is a series that has spent over twenty years celebrating the unique and the one of a kind. So with that said, we continue with this Razor Scooter, which is signed by Agent Mulder himself, and was given to the crew after David Duchovny left the show (well in a lead actor capacity) after Season Seven... after a dispute with Fox urged him to say 'on yer bike' (or scooter in this case). The wheelie item is signed with a message of thanks from Duchovny to the crew and is another pricier item on this list. The signed scooters remain in many of the crewmembers' possession, but some have found their way online and reached heights of over \$500, and in 2001 one was donated to a 9/11 charity auction.

Morley Cigarettes (1993, Fox)

You may all have noticed that we have not yet made mention of a certain chain-smoking character who has become an integral face across *The X-Files*. We speak, of course, of The Smoking Man (played by William B. Davis - reprising the role in the upcoming miniseries in January), who initially made mostly dialogue-free appearances in the first series of the show, before morphing into the show's insidious lead villain. The character's name was eventually revealed in Season Six as C.G.B. Spender, but we will always know him as The Smoking Man. Whether he's being a swine alongside the syndicate or coldly observing, he always seems to be puffing away on those sodding Morley cigarettes! The brand is, of course, fictitious but that hasn't stopped the props being sold over the years since the very first season. The ciggie might seem like no biggie, but these packs are often to be found around movie and TV merchandise auctions - we're surprised he had any left to sell!



X-Files Christmas Ornaments (2015, Fox)

Cover your ears, peeps, because we have to say this but Christmas is upon us and avoiding it is about as likely as C.G.B. Spender's lungs getting a clean bill of health. From shops blasting you with Slade to TV ads indoctrinating the kids into wanting a doll that farts or a game that requires a new mortgage, 'tis the season to be jolly indeed. However, if you want to upset the equilibrium and invite a bit of the unusual into your home this festive season (and we don't mean inviting the Peacock family for Christmas dinner), there are these unique *X-Files* Christmas ornaments that will look at home on the tree of any sci-fi buff. Nothing says Christmas like a show about creatures, conspiracies, and missing sisters.



OUTSIDE THE BOX

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH PAUL MOUNT



Series Nine Viewing Figures

Fans hoping for a recovery from the disappointing ratings posted by the first half of the recently-concluded ninth series of **Doctor Who** have been able to find precious little solace in the final consolidated figures for subsequent episodes as they've become available. **Outside the Box** has reported in the last two issues on the undeniable fact that the series has clearly lost upwards of a million viewers since the end of 2014's eighth series (the first to star Peter Capaldi as The Doctor), and it's now clear that the show has fallen out of favour with a not-inconsiderable proportion of the audience that has remained broadly loyal to the series since its return in 2005. More worrying, though, is available data in terms of the show's audience enjoyment of the episode – the Appreciation Index figure collated by the BBC whereby the monitored audience who contribute to the BARB Ratings Panel rate programmes scoring in a range of 1 to 100. **Doctor Who** has typically scored well here, usually in the upper 80 range (suggesting that viewers found the programme 'excellent'), but Series Nine has seen several episodes dropping

below 85 with Mark Gatiss' controversial *Sleep No More* dropping to 78 and Steven Moffat's experimental *Heaven Sent* mustering a score of just 80. These numbers obviously aren't catastrophic and still place the show in the 'very good' category, but the subtext is that a significant proportion of an already-declining audience is not finding the show as rewarding and enjoyable an experience as they did a year or so ago.

Last month, we reported the overnight figure of 3.87 million for *The Zygon Invasion*, the first of a two-part story that saw a return engagement between the Doctor and his old enemies the Zygons (first seen battling Tom Baker's Doctor back in 1975 and more recently resurrected in the fiftieth anniversary special *Day of the Doctor* in 2013). The seven-day consolidated timeshift figure for the episode settled at a fairly lowly 5.76 million, the second lowest figure for the new series to date. *The Zygon Invasion*, the second episode, fared a little better with an overnight rating of 4.13 million, rising to 6.03 million after seven days. The Zygon episodes posted AI figures of 82 and 84 respectively. Gatiss' *Sleep No More* dropped back to 4 million

overnight, rising to a series low of 5.61 after the seven-day timeshift. Sarah Dollard's moody and atmospheric *Face the Raven*, which purported to feature the 'death' of companion Clara Oswald (yeah, *right*) rose to 4.48 overnight, clambering back over 6 million after seven days, by which time the tally had risen to 6.05 million, and attained a healthy AI score of 84. Final figures are not available at the time of writing for the Peter Capaldi single-hander *Heaven Sent*, but the episode saw a further slight rise in the overnight figure with 4.51 million reported, suggesting another final figure of just over 6 million. The extended series finale episode *Hell Bent* (which *finally* bid farewell to Clara) dropped slightly to 4.47 million viewers in the overnight audience, with final figures not yet available.

Outside the Box will collate all the remaining information as well as available 28-day catch-up numbers and early figures for the Christmas special *The Husbands of River Song* (groan) next issue and ponder what it all means for the future of **Doctor Who** as it potentially embarks on another 'gap year' before returning next winter.

Moffat Climbs The Charts!

Despite **Doctor Who**'s declining stock in the UK (and probably because of **Sherlock**'s still relatively untarnished reputation), current showrunner Steven Moffat has rated at no. 76 in the *Media Guardian*'s annual top 200 list of 'most powerful people in UK media'. Moffat ranked no. 84 in the 2014 chart and at his current rate of progress on the chart, he might break into the Top Ten by the time he finally relinquishes his vice-like grip as **Doctor Who**'s head honcho.

America Goes Underwater!

The final 'classic' series **Doctor Who** DVD - the incomplete *The Underwater Menace*, released in the UK in October - is finally slated for a release in North America. The DVD, whose two still-lost episodes are supported by reconstructions in the form of Telesnaps from the collection of the late TV historian John Cura, is now tentatively scheduled for DVD release stateside on March 1st, 2016.

Step Aboard The TARDIS

There's still time for visitors to the **Doctor Who Experience** at Cardiff Bay to wander around the actual TARDIS set *in situ* at the nearby BBC Roath Lock Studios as special TARDIS Set Tour visit tickets will be available alongside Experience tickets until January 1st, 2016. Tickets remain available from the **Doctor Who Experience** website at a cost of £23 per adult (Experience and TARDIS tour), £17 for children, and £71 for a family ticket.

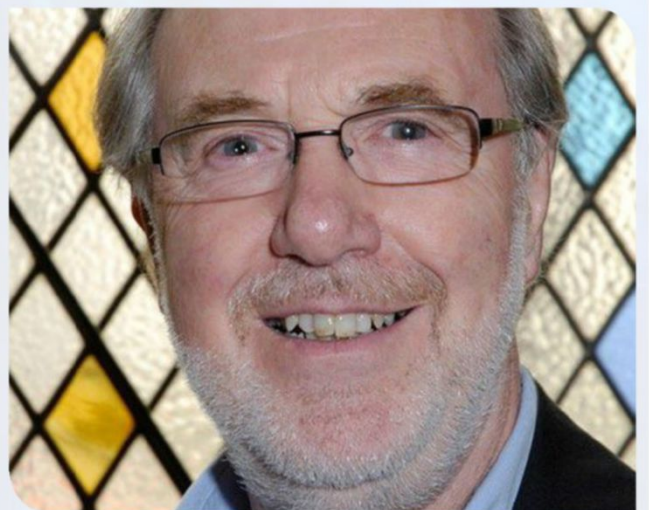


BBC Store Launches Beginners' Guide to DOCTOR WHO

The new BBC online store has launched a special selection of classic and new series episodes to provide what's described as 'a beginners' guide' to **Doctor Who** for viewers unfamiliar with the show's sprawling history to download, demonstrating the show's versatility and the scope of its storytelling over the years. Says BBC Store's Simon Farquhar: "Some people might feel a bit overwhelmed by **Doctor Who** and not know where to start exploring it. If you've ever found yourself wondering about the history of the Whoniverse and how it evolved, then our Beginners' Guide is here to help audiences navigate time and space across the most imaginative world television has ever created. We've tried to select stories that exemplify the different eras the show has gone through, from the eerie black and white beginnings to the Gothic horror of the mid-seventies and the fast-paced furore of today's series. It's been difficult with so many episodes and Doctors to choose from, but this collection is a fun way to begin exploring **Doctor Who**." Stories/episodes available in the new collection include *Tomb of the Cybermen* (1967), *Spearhead from Space* (1970), *Genesis of the Daleks* (1975), *Talons of Weng-Chiang* (1977), *Earthshock* (1981), *Rose* (2005), *Blink* (2007), *The Day of the Doctor* (2013), and *Mummy on the Orient Express* (2014). Download prices range from £1.89 (single episodes) and £4.99 (four-part serials) to £7.99 (six-parters). Début serial *An Unearthly Child* from 1963 is frustratingly unavailable for inclusion due to rights issues.

Obituary: Anthony Read

Anthony Read, prolific TV scriptwriter throughout the 1960s and 1970s, who went on to script-edit the 1978 *Key to Time* series of **Doctor Who**, passed away on November 21st at the age of 80. In the 1960s, Read wrote, script-edited, and produced popular BBC oil industry drama **The Troubleshooters** and in the 1970s, he worked on shows such as **Crown Court** and **Z-Cars**, before joining **Doctor Who** in 1977 to take over from Robert Holmes in the post of script editor and co-writing the script for the fifteenth series finale *The Invasion of Time* with series producer Graham Williams under the pseudonym David Agnew. Together Williams and Read crafted the umbrella-themed *Key to Time* and, having moved on from his script editing role (passed on to Douglas Adams who he had encouraged to contribute to the sixteenth series), wrote the seventeenth series finale story *The Horns of Nimon*. After leaving the world of **Doctor Who**, Read went on to write for series as diverse as **The Professionals**, **The Omega Factor**, and **Sapphire and Steel** as well as writing all three of ITV's children's series **Chocky**, based on the novel by John Wyndham. He is survived by his wife Rosemary and their two daughters.



REVIEWS

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE WORLDS
OF DOCTOR WHO
WITH PAUL MOUNT



UNIT: EXTINCTION

DIRECTOR: KEN BENTLEY / **AUTHOR:** ANDREW SMITH, MATT FITTON / **STARRING:** JEMMA REDGRAVE, INGRID OLIVER, WARREN BROWN, RAMON TIKARAM, JAMES JOYCE / **PUBLISHER:** BIG FINISH / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

This series has received a lot of hype since its announcement, one of the reasons being that with the inclusion of both Kate Stewart and Osgood, Big Finish were now starting to dip into the world of Doctor Who's modern era, but, of course, since then they've announced a new Torchwood series and adventures starring John Hurt and David Tennant's Doctors. It's fair to say that Extinction lives up to its hype and more so. In fact, this four-part adventure feels like a perfect mixture of both the classic and modern eras.

You have modern-day UNIT (set before the events of The Day of the Doctor), yet the scenario feels very reminiscent of the previous Auton adventures from the Jon Pertwee era, with a little nod to their 2005 story added in. Even though they were an effective menace during their first two adventures, the Autons were later relegated somewhat to being your standard monster-of-the-week enemy, so having them as the focus for this kind of story sounded troubling. However, this story restores their menace factor, and the clever use of 3D printers as a means to produce plastic replacement parts, like an individual's skull for example, which even though it's kind of cool is still creepy and disturbing.

Extinction does a very good job of being an exciting, globetrotting, action-adventure, and both Matt Fitton and Andrew Smith do a great job of maintaining the momentum and pace all the way through. Not once does the story lag or feel like padding, and it also does a great job of laying the seeds for future UNIT adventures, which should be exciting. We also have great character development for all the characters involved, and it's not just Kate Stewart or Osgood, but also the new supporting characters, like Josh Carter or Jacqui McGee.

During the Christopher Eccleston/David Tennant eras, UNIT lacked that family core that became the backbone for the UNIT stories of the '70s, but in 2012 that all changed when Jemma Redgrave arrived on the scene as Kate Stewart. The addition

of Ingrid Oliver's Osgood a year later meant that from then on, a new UNIT family was made in Who's modern era. Redgrave still maintains the dramatic gusto and dynamism she has in the TV episodes, and it's great to see a Kate that doesn't rely on the Doctor's help. This story gives Kate a sense of agency, yet she also maintains an element of doubt within her, questioning her own leadership and wondering what her father would've done, all of which makes Kate more intriguing. Oliver is still a charming presence as Osgood, and we do get some nice character moments from her. In this story, she's pretty much an adrenaline junkie, managing to thrive in dangerous situations whilst still retaining her scientific interests and always accomplishing what's asked of her. The supporting cast do a solid job, with particular standouts being James Joyce, Tracey Wiles and Steve John Shepherd, plus it's great to see Nicholas Briggs in two contrasting roles.

If Extinction is the start of a new series of UNIT adventures, then here's hoping it's a long one. This is an incredibly solid story that succeeds on every level; the acting, the sound design, the pacing, are all excellent. Plus, it's nice that when the Doctor's too busy to save the world, we see what Kate, Osgood and their team are capable of, and by the look of this, they've got everything covered just fine.

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★★★★10



TORCHWOOD: FORGOTTEN LIVES

DIRECTOR: SCOTT HANDCOCK / **AUTHOR:** EMMA REEVES / **STARRING:** EVE MYLES, KAI OWEN, PHILIP BOND, VALMAI JONES, SEAN CARLSEN, EMMA REEVES / **PUBLISHER:** BIG FINISH / **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW

We're almost venturing into uncharted territory here. While the previous entries in

this series of Torchwood have been set in the past, this one is the first to take place after the events of Miracle Day, and it's body-swapping time as we meet a culture called The Evolved.

The body-swapping provides a unique opportunity for Captain Jack to appear even though John Barrowman himself doesn't have any lines in this release. Frankly, we wish he had; the voice of 'Jack' is laughable. We get that part of the point is that it sounds weird to us and that the voices are filtered, but couldn't the voice have sounded like a halfway-decent impression rather than what we got?

We also have an issue with the slight retconning of Miracle Day. Surely the Erebus conspiracy shown here could have stood on its own, rather than having this story suggest that Erebus influenced the Three Families in their decade-long scheme. Separate factions working towards similar goals is not unheard of.

It's definitely worth commending the general plotting and dialogue here; those

aspects are very strong and the idea of an alien species whose whole point is that they're incredibly up themselves is a very good one and seems like exactly the kind of thing that Torchwood would have to deal with. We also loved the bits with the hairdryer and with Gary.

The setting is suitably atmospheric; Torchwood was always great at the alien among the mundane and this story has oodles of that. That's quite true of the range so far, in fact: it's captured what exactly made the show so good (you know, when it was good). Fall to Earth was always going to be a tough act to follow (we're still thinking about it now!) but fortunately Forgotten Lives does a great job of living up to it. Though it has its flaws, it's still a good outing and you won't be disappointed.

Unless you like halfway convincing American accents.

SCOTT VARNHAM

★★★★★★★★★★★★7

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LIVVY BOOTE is...

THE GIRL FROM PLANET X



Last issue, I spoke about the importance of diverse superheroes. I argued that whilst female-led superhero shows inevitably face negative criticism, they are essential to showing the world that girls can be heroes too. If we can keep female superheroes on the screens, slowly but surely, people will realise that a hero doesn't have to be a guy for the show to be entertaining.

And, lo and behold, along comes *Jessica Jones*, winner of my heart.

Well, not in that way, because she's not my type. But the show... well, the show is definitely my type.

Jessica Jones' story goes like this: creepy predator David Tennant (aka Kilgrave) uses his mind controlling power to force people to do whatever he wants. When he meets Jessica, he is instantly captivated, forcing her to do all sorts of things - from buying lingerie to murder. Luckily, she escapes his grasp - but months later, Kilgrave seems to have returned from the dead, and it's down to Jessica, the only one strong enough and smart enough, to bring him down.

Oh yes... and she has super strength.

I've banged on about how television and film is lacking in female leads. Well, now, I'm going to bang on about how important and brilliant *Jessica Jones* is. I don't know about you, but I've had enough of white guys dominating my screens, so I think it's about time we give shows like this a little love. And with it debuting so spectacularly on Netflix, I doubt it'll miss out on the reception it deserves.

There are so many wonderful things

about this show. Not only is the main lead a woman, but she's a genuinely interesting character, too. She's not necessarily likeable. She's complicated, and she's kick-ass. As someone who's never read the comics, I must admit that I wasn't really sure about her at first. I was worried that she'd be the female character who is entirely masculinised so that she can appear to be a 'strong' female character. There's nothing progressive about writing female characters who are basically scripted as men, but played by women. Not that there's anything wrong with tomboys or women who aren't strictly girly - but when female superheroes only seem strong because they've had every

semblance of being a girl erased, apart from their appearance, it's really damaging.

However, after some analysis (*cough cough* marathoning it in two days *cough cough*) and having watched the whole series, I realised that this wasn't the case for *Jessica Jones*. And a lot of the reason why we root for her so much, why she's such an amazing female character, is because of her relationship with David Tennant's terrifying role. Because of his character, Kilgrave, I understood just how important *Jessica Jones* is to the comic book community, the sci-fi community, and society in general, to be honest. This show is important, because of the *kind* of villain that our female hero is overcoming.

I could mention that there is amazing diversity in this show besides Jessica in the lead role. A show that has plenty of characters that aren't white is always a good thing to see, and ought to be encouraged more. Plus there's some LGBT representation (as problematic as their relationships may be). But what I *really* want to discuss in depth is the importance of a hero who conquers emotionally abusive, manipulative villains. I *have* to talk about the fact that we are literally watching a superhero take down a baddy that is a metaphor for abusive relationships.

This isn't a man in a star spangled uniform punching a robot in the face. Nor is it a grumpy man with bat ears chasing after some rich powerful man in his car. This is the story of a woman, a victim of abuse, overcoming her assault and putting a stop to her (albeit superpowered) abuser once



Jessica meets Kilgrave whilst trying to gather evidence against him.

THERE'S SUPERHEROES. THERE'S FEMALE SUPERHEROES. AND THEN THERE'S JESSICA JONES...

and for all, to help men and women across the world.

Kilgrave uses his mind control to make people do whatever he wants. When he finds Jessica, he uses his power to force her to do just that - making her an accomplice in murder, do sexual things for him. After Jessica escapes and finds out his tragic backstory, he uses it to find pity, uses the experiments his parents did on him as a boy as an excuse for evil. But, as we all know, and as we see frequently in the series, even if you've lost someone or you've experienced trauma that does not excuse you from villainy.

Kilgrave is terrifying, not just because he's a murderer, but because he is realistic. He's manipulative and convinces his victims that everything that has happened because of him is their fault - the murders he made them commit, the consequences of them escaping from his grasp, everything. He tries to convince you that you are ungrateful, giving you gifts and trying to show empathy, but in the end leaves you powerless. He says he loves Jessica to make her feel guilty and make it more difficult for her to escape. This is an issue that thousands of men and women across the world face with partners or friends.

This isn't a nice subject, I know, but comic books are meant to give us heroes that we can relate to, and it's never that warm or fuzzy. Captain America overcoming the Nazis was an important and not too trivial comic book series for its time, and this isn't really too different; Jessica Jones is just overcoming a different enemy, and



Step back man - I got this covered...

that happens to be abusive relationships. Kilgrave is just one big walking metaphor for the importance of consent, and, well... not manipulating people. And that, sadly, is an issue we see all the time amongst real-life people.

Kilgrave is the man that every woman is scared of. And we get to see a woman defeat him.

You can't tell me that isn't important and inspiring. Jessica Jones is the superhero I've been waiting for. I've been waiting for a hero who'll clear the streets of rapists and abusive husbands, representing the strength that men and women need these days,

and here she is, a woman overcoming her trauma and putting a stop to it before it hurts anyone else. And that, to me, is way more inspiring than Batman ever was.

On another note, it's a nice change having the girls be the brains *and* the muscle, too. Knowing that there are guys around who can help, and who would be pretty useful, but aren't essential. To have the women in charge without any questions asked.

And another thing, on the subject of power dynamics between partners - but on a much lighter note - there are some fantastic sex scenes in this show. Sex scenes that show that the guy doesn't always have to assert dominance or control for it to be normal or enjoyable. In fact, there doesn't have to be any men involved at all. This seems quite important to me, because, personally, if there are going to be sex scenes in a show, I like it when they don't make me cringe by being creepy or unrealistic. That's a bonus.

I've said it before, I'll say it again. I know I've been getting repetitive recently, but it's really important to stress how important stuff like *Jessica Jones* is. This isn't just another Marvel series. This is about minorities, those without power regaining control, fighting their demons - whether that be drugs, abusive/stalker partners, or losing loved ones. This is a show about real life problems and real life people. With, you know, a little bit of superpower magic thrown in. *This*, I think, is why comic books were created in the first place; to show that *everyone* has the strength to beat their bad guys.



Jessica Jones - Kicking ass and inspiring in equal measure

IT'S A GIALLO CLASSIC THAT HAS BEEN CRIMINALLY OVERLOOKED, BUT HAS A FANTASTIC PEDIGREE AND BOASTS A WEALTH OF TALENT, SO PREPARE TO FIND OUT, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SOLANGE?

MURDER MOS

Unless you are more than a casual fan of giallo, there is a good chance that Massimo Dallamano's *What Have You Done to Solange?* will have passed you by. While there could be many reasons for this, the most likely is that Dallamano is not one of the first few names necessarily associated with the genre. Notable directors such as Mario Bava and Umberto Lenzi, Lucio Fulci and, especially, Dario Argento, who arguably turned giallo into a cultural phenomenon, are renowned and respected throughout the world, but Dallamano is notable more for his absence. Interesting, then, that he produced one of the most interesting films in the classic giallo era.

Beginning his career as a cinematographer under the name Jack Dalmas, Dallamano worked on Sergio Leone's *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) and *For A Few Dollars More* (1965), before directing his first spaghetti western *Bandidos* in 1967. Before his tragic death in a car accident in 1976, aged just 59, Dallamano only directed a dozen or so films but one, *What Have You Done to Solange?*, is without doubt one of the most significant in the Golden Age of giallo. Although some consider it not to be a giallo in the truest sense, as it does not adhere to the unique conventions of the genre.

The debate over *Solange* (as we shall call it henceforth for ease) exists due to its comparison thematically and stylistically with another genre of Italian cinema, and essentially world cinema in the 1970s: that of the action-crime thriller. While the base structure of a giallo film can be simplistically defined as a gruesome murder mystery, often with a sexual, paranoid or supernatural element, *Solange* follows much more of a standard format. While Italian teacher Enrico Rosseni (played with impeccable style by Fabio Testi) is seducing his young mistress (Cristina Galbó, best known for *The Living Dead at Manchester Morgue*, 1974 – see *Horror Obscura* #401) she witnesses what she thinks may have been a sadistic murder. Complications ensue as they are student and teacher at an exclusive all-girls school, and as more murders occur, their relationship and involvement in the case comes under increased scrutiny. What's more, Rosseni's frosty German wife is also a teacher at the school and harbours justifiable doubts over her husband's fidelity. As rumours of seedy covens and dark cults are revealed, the mystery deepens even further.

Within the more conventional story of *Solange*, there are several elements that do establish it as giallo, but also several more that set Dallamano's key work apart.

During the killings, which are typically sexual in nature, the mysterious antagonist wears black leather gloves, and the action is seen from a first-person point of view. This, perhaps more than any other trait, is what people remember from giallo films. Furthermore, heightened, vulnerable and at times innocent sexuality are prevalent throughout and the motive for the crimes is similar in theme to that often used giallo trope of insanity or madness; either inherent or temporary. The notable differences come in the style of direction and the inclusion of greater subtlety in the design. Many giallo films are often categorised by their brash and at times lurid style but *Solange* is considerably more subdued, plainer if you will, as there is a distinct lack of that 'high fashion' element. That is not to say this is a dull film; quite the contrary, but it is designed much more like a typical thriller than an excessively indulgent giallo.

Dallamano's direction is perhaps the most interesting aspect. While encompassing many traditional giallo traits, he restrains the camera, resisting the sweeping visuals and disorientating movement that typifies many of the films of Argento and Bava. Here there is a more serious tone, specifically as the story moves towards its bleak revelation, and this gives *Solange* much more of a grounded feel, focusing on the performances rather than the surrounding visuals. Camille Keaton, most famous for rape-revenge horror *I Spit on Your Grave*, recalls the filming process:

"We shot most of the film in England although it was a German-Italian co-production. I only had about three or four days' work within two and a half weeks so I had plenty of time off and I got to explore London, which was really exciting. And it was on *Solange* that I learned how to do certain things because the director Massimo Dallamano works very closely with his actors. So I learned a lot about how to



By John Townsend

T THRILLING



work in front of the camera from him."

Keaton's comments are interesting as they identify Dallamano as an actor's director. In the film, Keaton has no dialogue whatsoever despite portraying the titular Solange, and the central figure in the mystery. That said, it is her otherworldly performance that engages the viewer through the final act when the revelations come to the fore. There are similarities in the depth of the performance given by Keaton, and by her fellow cast members, to those Dallamano will have observed while working with Leone on his spaghetti westerns, and this isn't the latter's only influence.

There are many memorable elements to Leone's classic films, but the music is what remains in audience's minds long after the film is over. For *Solange*, Dallamano returned to what he knew best and brought Ennio Morricone in to compose the score. The sweeping, at times operatic, soundtrack contrasts with uncomfortably long periods of silence and adds further weight to the argument *Solange* is not just a standard giallo film. Less aggressive and involving an aural experience than more typical films of the genre, *Solange* is no less impactful as the stunning score is more innovatively cinematic than the electronic punctuation delivered by Goblin and the like. This is complemented by the masterful

cinematography of Aristide Massaccesi – better known to cult movie fans as prolific filmmaker Joe D'Amato.

There is also a conscious nod to western audiences. To overcome the dubbing issue that was prevalent in many of his contemporaries films, Dallamano had all his actors – regardless of their nationality – speak English. In doing so, he made it easier for later dubbing, allowing it to be more effortlessly matched to the lip movements and therefore instantly removing a barrier some audiences had always struggled with.

So is *Solange* a giallo film or not?

Well, in truth, yes.

Despite its origins in the German 'krimi' film movement (and being based on *The Clue of the New Pin* by legendary crime writer Edgar Wallace, who also wrote the first draft screenplay of the 1933 version of *King Kong*), and with the Berlin-based Rialto Film Company as a primary backer, *Solange* remains,

fundamentally, an Italian film in spirit. The more expressive films from Argento and Fulci will always grab the attention when discussing giallo, and perhaps rightly so, but *Solange* offers something else. Not as wildly imaginative as *Profondo Rosso* (AKA *Deep Red*, which we covered in #419) perhaps, or as boldly convoluted as *A Lizard in a Woman's Skin* certainly, *Solange* remains one of the most interesting of the period because of its differences rather than its similarities. If this is a film that has passed you by, then now should be the time to rectify that. +

WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO SOLANGE?
is out on Blu-ray from ARROW VIDEO.



A NEW BEGINNING:

AN INTRODUCTION TO SURVIVORS

BY J. R. SOUTHALL

Back in the pre-*Star Wars* 1970s, sci-fi was all about dystopian futures and post-apocalyptic landscapes – even George Lucas himself mixed the two genres in his debut feature *THX 1138*. The BBC got in on the act with Dalek-creator Terry Nation's 1975 series *Survivors*, a bleak account of a world all but emptied of its population in the wake of a man-made disease that had originated in the Orient, and that thanks to an accident had broken free of its laboratory and been allowed to spread unchecked. Nation's subsequent series *Blake's 7* was hardly any less grim (if a little more colourfully characterised), and here Nation was analysing the potential consequences of a Cold War that at the time seemed all too ready to heat up.

Survivors was a huge success, partly thanks to the prevailing obsessions of a nation that still remembered rationing first-hand while fearing the imminence of the four-minute warning, but largely due to the casting of its three principal characters; as Greg, Jenny, and Abby, Ian McCulloch, Lucy Fleming, and Carolyn Seymour were middle class stoicism incarnate; between them combining all the attributes – toughness and warmth, determination and an unwillingness to suffer fools gladly – that the watching public would have hoped to possess in their stead. It helped that the subtly played relationship between Greg and Jenny was one that people could appreciate and identify with.

The 1970s' other obsession, again running in parallel with the too-real possibility of global Armageddon, was the kind of back-to-basics living that gave rise to the sitcom *The Good Life*, in which a suburban couple decide to shun modern technology and become totally self-sufficient, living

off the produce of their garden. By the midway point of *Survivors*' first series, its producer Terence Dudley was already at loggerheads with Terry Nation over the direction the programme should take, Dudley favouring the establishment of an agricultural settlement in which the characters could form a similar such base, and Nation preferring for them a more itinerant, action-adventure existence. The uneasy consensus between the two approaches allowed for a diversity of themes and a strength of narrative that is almost unparalleled in primetime television; the episode *Law and Order* is legendary, and rightly so, and *Survivors* is one of those rare, once-seen never-forgotten programmes that ranks alongside the likes of *Cathy Come Home* and *Edge of Darkness* in British television history.

Small wonder that it was ripe for a 21st century makeover, then, once *Strictly Come Dancing* and *Doctor Who* had proven that the successes of the past needn't stay in the past, but the 2008 BBC revival had neither the contemporary zeitgeist of the original, nor the strength of its casting in its favour, and didn't last long. And that's where Big Finish comes in.

Big Finish had three major advantages over the producers of the 2008 *Survivors*, the most obvious being that, as an audio drama



RICHARD HEFFER & CAROLYN SEYMOUR

As BIG FINISH unleashes the next series of *SURVIVORS*, an adaptation of the cult '70s serial, we look back at its genesis and forward to the continuing audio adventures...



JOHN BANKS, ANDREW FRENCH, PAUL THORNLEY, CAROLYN SEYMOUR, RICHARD HEFFER & CHRISTOPHER HATHERALL



CHRISTOPHER HATHERALL, PAUL THORNLEY & LOUISA CLEIN

series, they weren't seeking to appeal to the modern generation of television viewers and match whatever their current concerns were – and the second being that as an audio series, the fact that almost forty years had passed wouldn't stop them from using the same actors as the 1975 original and in the same roles, contemporaneously. But their biggest advantage was an understanding of the material. The thing that made *Survivors* work so well in 1975 was that no matter how unrelenting the plots, people cared what happened to the characters and desperately wanted them to succeed against whatever the episodes threw at them – and some of it was pretty dark. The Big Finish revival takes that as its central premise and works to it quite brilliantly.

The audio *Survivors*, then, now up to its third biannual series, each comprising four sixty-minute episodes, goes back to the beginning and retells the story of the apocalypse through the eyes of a handful of brand new characters. The genius of this approach is two-fold; firstly, it allows the company to tell its own stories without needing to be beholden to the plot-lines of the original series, despite taking place overtly within that same universe (rather than recreating it as the TV remake attempted to do), and secondly, it means that although we know the returning regulars from the 1975 series can't be killed off without wreaking havoc with the original continuity, the newly established characters aren't anything like as safe. And the writers have been quite prepared to use that.

One of the additional benefits of audio is the sheer amount of dialogue, which enables the production to create initially unsympathetic characters who the listener can easily warm to by having a more detailed experience of their motivations; one such character in the first series is Maddie Price, as played by Chase Masterson. The Big Finish story kicks off with Price attempting to return home to the States, and getting caught up in a confused and eventually besieged airport as the virus ultimately strikes home. By virtue of the drama being all in sound, it's easy to imagine situations such as this which the TV series could never have afforded to create. Louise Jameson joins the cast in episode two, and immediately the writers signal quite how far they're prepared to drive the original premise; Jackie Burchall's backstory is incredibly sad and moving, and yet at the same

time shocking and reprehensible. In the land that develops after the end of the world, the writers seem to be positing a new set of rules, which will dictate the differences between Right and Wrong.

The rest of the first series toys with bringing the new characters together – both with one another and with the returning cast of the original – but does so by relating a set of circumstances that essentially means all four hours have added up to a single story; in a way slightly more tangible way than if there had simply been continuing themes threaded throughout. The second and third series have continued this practice, by comprising four individual episodes each that combine to make a more coherent whole.

By creating an aural backdrop to the stories that avoids traditional melodies (the original TV series didn't include incidental music of any kind, adding to the feeling of the world as we knew it having ended), and by relying on an enormously strong cast all playing extremely well-drawn characters in stories that are every bit as engaging and thought-provoking as the 1975 series, With *Survivors* Big Finish have developed an immersive universe and an incredibly engaging set of dramas, possibly the finest work they've ever produced. If you're remotely interested in the genre, and even if you're not generally inclined towards audio drama, this is compelling stuff and easily deserving of your time.

SURVIVORS Series Three is out now from bigfinish.com.



DAMIAN LYNCH, ANDREW FRENCH, FIONA SHEEHAN, LISA BOWERMAN & PAUL THORNLEY

horrorchannel

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SATURDAY 23RD

I SPIT ON YOUR GRAVE
SATURDAY 30TH

2016

PREVIEW

As the year draws to a close, it's time to look ahead to what's in store for us in the coming year. With a host of massive properties on the way, our appetites are already well and truly whetted. There's always some interesting curveballs, though, so as they say, forewarned is forearmed...

MOVIES

JANUARY

ALSO RELEASED:

THE FORBIDDEN SPECTRE

THE BLOOD HARVEST



THE 5TH WAVE

Four waves of alien attacks have left the earth in ruins and humanity all but wiped out. First, an EMP attack destroyed the planet's electronics; then an orbital bombardment of fault lines caused earthquakes and tsunamis; followed by a global pandemic spread by birds. The fourth wave was the parasitic Others, inhabiting human hosts to infiltrate and destroy.

Cassie is a teenage girl attempting to survive the apocalyptic wilderness and rescue her brother from a military training camp. Not knowing who – if anyone – she can trust, she awaits the arrival of the fifth wave, which will be to destroy what remains of the human race. AM

CREED

A down and out Rocky Balboa mentoring a young upstart? We know, we know; you've likely heard this one before. But put all thoughts of Tommy 'The Machine' Gunn to the back of your mind, for **Creed** is the story of Adonis Johnson, the son of long-time Rocky rival/BFF Apollo Creed. Whilst Adonis battles with his own issues before turning to boxing and eventually a match-up with Liverpool's Tony Bellew, we'll also see Rocky battling with the problems of an ageing former-fighter-turned-trainer in what's planned to be the start of a new series of movies focusing on this new partnership. AP





THESE FINAL HOURS

Despite being released elsewhere a couple of years ago, **These Final Hours** finally gets a UK release in January 2016. The story focuses on the self-obsessed, arrogant James, played by **Wolf Creek's** Nathan Phillips, on the very last day on Earth. With just 12 hours to go before the planet is destroyed, one final party is the order of the day... well, until James ends up unexpectedly helping out a young girl, putting the bigger things into perspective as the world comes to an end. AP



COULROPHOBIA

A team of roller derby girls go camping in the untamed wilds of the Scottish Highlands, because pretty girls alone with nature never ends badly. Unfortunately, a little too close to where they pitch up their tents are the Grocks, a twisted family of circus performers on the run and hiding out in the desolate wilderness. Thus the stage is set for a showdown between sadistic freaks, clowns, acrobats, and contortionists, and a kickass team of roller-skating badasses. The title, in case you were wondering, is the technical name for that abnormal fear of clowns that decades of horror movies have gleefully instilled in you. AM



FEBRUARY

ALSO RELEASED:

SPACE DOGZ

COWBOYS
AND DEMONS

BEAUTY AND
THE BEAST

ASTERIX AND
OBELIX: MANSION
OF THE GODS

VIRUS OF THE DEAD:
UPLOADED

GOODNIGHT MUMMY

GOOSEBUMPS

In fairness, we're a little surprised it's taken this long for R.L. Stine's **Goosebumps** work to be given the big screen treatment. Stine, played here by Jack Black, is the man responsible for penning the famed **Goosebumps** children's horror tales, and this movie sees the monsters and beasts of said stories unleashed on the real world. It's down to Stine's daughter, played by Odeya Rush, and neighbour, played by Dylan Minnette, to help the author contain these ghouls and save the day. And yes, expect to see cameos from all of your favourite **Goosebumps** monsters of yesteryear. AP



BORLEY RECTORY

Borley Rectory looks set to be one of the most interesting films released in 2016. Billed as an animated documentary, Ashley Thorpe's film will examine the legends and myths that surround 'The most haunted house in England'. With Reece Shearsmith and **Hellraiser** legend Nicholas Vince bringing some genre credibility, and the promise of plenty of scares and surprises along the way, expectations for **Borley Rectory** are high. What is certain is that Thorpe's film will present a new and refreshing way of looking at the familiar haunted house story. *JT*



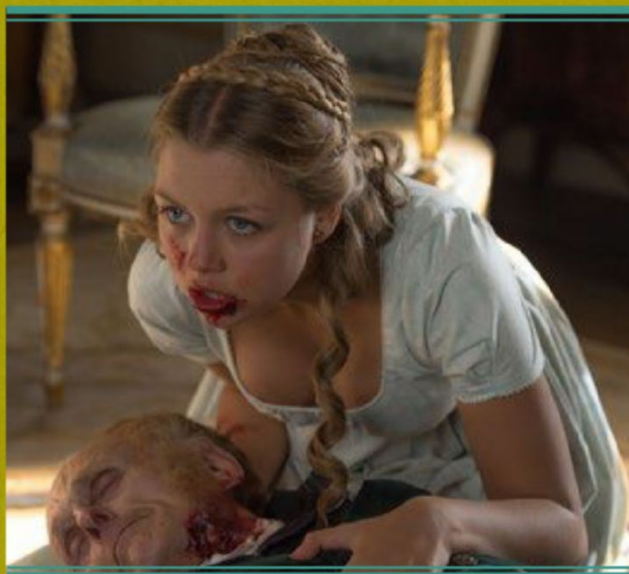
POINT BREAK

The original **Point Break** was - with apologies to anyone under the erroneous impression that **Dirty Dancing**'s a classic - the late Patrick Swayze's finest hour. Combining extreme sports, stunning action, some of the most ridiculous dialogue Swayze and Keanu Reeves ever spouted, and a typically unhinged Gary Busey, it's a ludicrous classic of '90s action cinema. Having already been kinda remade once already as the original **Fast and the Furious**, we've now got the official remake, which casts Édgar Ramírez, Luke Bracey, and Ray Winstone in the Swayze, Reeves, and Busey roles respectively. As before, young FBI agent Johnny Utah (Bracey) infiltrates a group of extreme sports enthusiasts, who may be committing a series of robberies to finance their lifestyle; only this time with bigger heists, more sports and more globetrotting. As with the original - which happily threw its stars out of planes - the emphasis here is on keeping it real, with some stunning stunt work on display. *IR*



HAIL, CAESAR!

The latest offering from the Coen Brothers features (as ever) an all-star cast, this time headed up by George Clooney and Josh Brolin. Plot-wise, the focus is on Brolin's Eddie Mannix, a Hollywood 'fixer' who studios bring in to oversee any problems that may occur during a production. When Clooney's Baird Whitlock is kidnapped, it's down to Mannix to get the actor safely back on set. Also along for the ride are Scarlett Johansson, Tilda Swinton, Ralph Fiennes, Jonah Hill, Channing Tatum, Clancy Brown, Christopher Lambert (there can be only one!), Dolph Lundgren (random, we know) and Coen mainstay Frances McDormand. *AP*



PRIDE AND PREJUDICE AND ZOMBIES

Elizabeth Bennett is a proper young woman in Regency England, learning all she must to be considered ladylike while also forever honing the zombie killing skills required to battle the scourge of undead abominations ravaging the country. Upon meeting the haughty and arrogant monster hunter Mr Darcy, the two of them immediately clash, only to bicker, argue and fight their way to romance. Based on a novel that kickstarted the historical mashup literary subgenre that was wildly popular for about 18 months, six years ago, **P&P&Z** keeps the majority of the plot of Jane Austen's classic novel of manners while adding in apocalyptic survival horror themes. It will be as mental as it sounds. *AM*

JEM AND THE HOLOGRAMS

Based on the animated '80s series of the same name, this live-action version of **Jem and the Holograms** tells the story of a teenage YouTube sensation's quest to become a musical megastar. Teaming up with her foster sisters, and assisted by a robot called S1N3RGY that was created by her father (because why not?), a whole host of catchy bubblegum pop/punk numbers and some sort of moral story involving family ties and corporate greed are at the top of our list of expectations. Reception to the movie stateside has been less than stellar, but we'll keep an open mind until Jem and her crew arrive on UK shores in February 2016. CJA



DEADPOOL

Well, hello there. My name is Deadpool. Let me introduce you to my film. It tells the story of me, where I begin as some Van Wilder-looking chump trying to escape the ravages of cancer. One trip later to a shady experimental lab run by a bald English guy and a bob-cut rage monster and I am transformed, phoenix-like, into the sword-wielding, regenerating, black-and-red-suited badass you see in the picture accompanying this synopsis. There will be a severe amount of ass-kicking on all fronts as I hunt down someone who angered me for a reason, being generally hilarious all the way. If you're nice, I may well give you the occasional comment as the film progresses, just to make sure you're paying attention. AM



GODS OF EGYPT

Set, the god of darkness rules over the kingdom of Egypt and has thrust the prosperous nation into despair, mercilessly destroying all who dare to oppose him. Two heroes rise to rebel against his rule. First is Bek, a young human thief striving to free his beautiful love Zaya from the Set's captivity after she was taken as a prize by the sadistic deity. His quest is aided by Horus, the rightful ruler of the gods and Set's nephew, whose father Osiris the god of the dead was murdered by Set for his throne. AM

DAD'S ARMY

One may be very hard pushed to find anyone who's actually excited for this film. Although a stellar cast including Michael Gambon and Bill Nighy will be worth a watch, the fact that this remake comes from the writer/director duo behind **St. Trinian's** and **Johnny English Reborn** suggests **Dad's Army** will be less than substantial. Harmless fun it may turn out to be, but seeing this film may also end up feeling like being impaled by Jones' bayonet. FM

MARCH

ALSO RELEASED:

HITCHCOCK/TRUFFAUT

KUNG FU PANDA 3

ZOOTROPOLIS



BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

After being teased with the notion for decades now, finally the Dark Knight and Kal-El are to butt heads on the big screen. Sure, Zack Snyder's **Man of Steel** follow-up may look a little crowded - Wonder Woman, Aquaman, and Victor Stone (the future Cyborg) are all confirmed for appearances, with suggestions of a Flash cameo too - but the footage seen so far has been stunning. Expect to see Ben Affleck's Bats and Henry Cavill's Supes throw down before coming together to lay the early foundations of the Justice League as they take down a threat led by Jesse Eisenberg's Lex Luthor. AP



LONDON HAS FALLEN

Mike Banning (Gerard Butler) saved the day in **Olympus Has Fallen** battling terrorists in the White House. This time he's in London, where he discovers a plot to assassinate the world leaders at the Prime Minister's funeral after his mysterious death. Banning teams up with an MI-6 agent (Angela Bassett) who trusts no one, the President of the United States and the head of the Secret Service to thwart the bad guys. Morgan Freeman reprises his role from the last film. Directed by Babak Najafi, expect lots of cookie-cutter action and historic landmarks destroyed in this second instalment of the 'Dumb Hard' series. WSB



THE FOREST

Set in Japan's notorious Aokigahara, or Suicide Forest to give its more macabre title, Jason Zada's debut feature looks set to offer a twist on the traditional 'cabin in the woods' story. When her twin sister disappears into the trees, Natalie Dormer's Sara vows to find out what happened. As she enters the forest ignoring the many warnings, she comes under attack and learns not all the spirits are friendly. We expect there to be plenty of supernatural scares to be found among the shadows. JT



THE WITCH

If you go down in the woods today, you're sure of... an exercise in sustained mounting terror! First time writer/director Robert Eggers takes folklore and factual historical records and weaves them into a beautifully crafted script about an outcast family in 1630s New England, which is torn apart by the forces of witchcraft and black magic. Ralph Ineson (**The Office**) gives a career defining performance as pious patriarch William, whose religious belief and family are assaulted by a seldom seen force of evil. Anya Taylor-Joy, as eldest daughter Thomasin, plays her role to perfection eliciting sympathy as suspicion for the family's ill fortune is levelled at her. Bleak and terrifying, **The Witch** will be welcomed by horror fans wearied by the slew of teenage slasher flicks that have become a staple of the genre. And if the whispered "What dost thou want of me?" doesn't send a shiver down your spine, then you clearly lack one. CJo



60 SECONDS TO DIE

Outdoing even **The ABCs of Death** in quick-fire horror, **60 Seconds to Die** sees eighty one-minute-long films machine-gunned into your eyeballs. The flash blast of an anthology will feature a wide variety of dangers such as demons, vampires, devils, ghosts, killer clowns, eerie doppelgängers, flesh-eating viruses and lethal Christmas trees stalk a luckless assortment of doomed victims, with a short countdown clock and a swift death the only guarantees. AM



THE DIVERGENT SERIES: ALLEGIANT

Being a movie series based on a dystopian young adult novel, it's hard not to compare **Divergent** to **The Hunger Games**. This is a bit unfair as **Divergent** bears a closer resemblance to the likes of **Brave New World** and **Gattaca** than anything else, and in many ways is a staunch lecture on the dangers of eugenics. **Allegiant**, the second movie in the three part series, should see a significant uptick in action. As Tris (Shailene Woodley) and Four (Theo James) head out of the city, things should get nicely violent. We can't wait to see if the movie version is as compelling as the novel. EF

APRIL

ALSO RELEASED:

MONSTER TRUCKS

BONE WALKER

IMMUNE

**CAPTAIN AMERICA: CIVIL WAR**

It's been brewing for a while, but the dissension between Steve Rogers and Tony Stark is set to come to an explosive head in the Russo Brothers' **Captain America: Civil War**. After events that cause a rift amongst The Avengers, Cap finds himself joined in the trenches by The Falcon, Hawkeye, Agent 13 and The Winter Soldier, whilst Iron Man has support in the shape of War Machine, Black Widow, The Vision and the debuting Black Panther. Additionally, **Civil War** will feature the first MCU appearance of Spider-Man, whilst an old foe of Cap's is set to rear his head once more. ^{AP}

SON OF SAUL

To survive in a Nazi extermination camp, Hungarian Jew Saul becomes a Sonderkommando: an inmate who assists his captors with tasks considered beneath them. One of these tasks is to burn the dead bodies of his people, but when Saul spots a young boy he risks his own life to give the child a proper send off. László Nemes chooses to focus on just one death among the millions and how successful this difficult balance is will determine the film's success. Either way, *Son of Saul* looks set to be a heart-wrenching and harrowing experience. ^{JT}

**THE TREES THAT BLED**

This low budget indie horror movie promises to be an old school tale of summer holidays gone wrong, missing teenagers and ancient pagan sacrifices. Not much more information is available as yet, but we know Victor Wright is behind the screenplay, and given that he tends to favour gore and fear as his motifs, this should be a corker. Wright has written horror novels and comics before, and we've been delighted by the results. Fingers are firmly crossed that this will be another scare-fest. ^{EF}

THE JUNGLE BOOK

We all know the loose story of Rudyard Kipling's classic **Jungle Book** series by now; the orphaned Mowgli is raised in the jungle by a pack of wolves and befriends a bear and a black panther as he tries to stay alive and avoid the pits and perils of temptation. This latest effort from Jon Favreau arrives at a time when live-action performances can be flawlessly combined with CGI elements to give a fresh take on this familiar tale. Neel Sethi stars as Mowgli, with the likes of Idris Elba, Bill Murray, Lupita Nyong'o, and Scarlett Johansson lending their vocals to the feature. AP



THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

A sequel to 2012's **Snow White and the Huntsman**, this time with Chris Hemsworth's Huntsman taking centre-stage. Similarly, Charlize Theron's Evil Queen is back, and the duo are joined by Jessica Chastain, Emily Blunt, Nick Frost, Rob Brydon, Sam Claflin, Sheridan Smith, and a whole host of other names. Expect plenty of heroism and endangered princess types as Cedric Nicolas-Troyan's movie looks to reach the same heights of the 2012 original. AP

MAY

ALSO RELEASED:

THE DARK CHANNEL

DISTURBED

FOXTRAP

DEATHNET

ALICE THROUGH
THE LOOKING
GLASS

Acting as sequel to Tim Burton's 2010 **Alice in Wonderland**, Mia Wasikowska returns as Alice for another magical, fantastical adventure. With Burton serving as a producer this time out, **Muppets Most Wanted**'s James Bobin takes over directorial duties. Plot-wise, Alice heads back to Wonderland to help rescue Johnny Depp's Mad Hatter. Making up an impressive ensemble once more, the cast includes Helena Bonham Carter, Anne Hathaway, Alan Rickman, Michael Sheen, Rhys Ifans, Stephen Fry, and Sacha Baron Cohen. AP



X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

Bringing to a close a trilogy that began with **X-Men: First Class**, Bryan Singer's **X-Men: Apocalypse** is set to be the biggest X-movie to date as it focuses on the titular rogue, the first and most powerful mutant to ever come into creation and who has just a bit of a God complex. Reawakening to find the current world gone to the dogs, Oscar Isaac's Apocalypse sets about 'cleansing' humanity. As faces both familiar and new join Apocalypse, it's down to Professor X, Mystique, and Beast to lead a group of young mutants in saving the world. AP

THE ANGRY BIRDS MOVIE

A movie based on a mobile phone game? Yep, it's happening, and despite any game adaptations being a risky business (see the woeful **Battleship** as a prime example), **The Angry Birds Movie** is flying onto screens May 2016. Angry Birds as a game is essentially flinging birds at green pigs, yet despite having barely anything to work with, a script by Jon Vitti (**The Simpsons**) has been developed that sees the angry birds' island of paradise disrupted by the arrival of those sneering pigs. With voice talent aplenty in the guise of Jason Sudeikis, Danny McBride, Maya Rudolph and Peter Dinklage, **The Angry Birds Movie** will be aiming their catapult for the fun animation route of **The Lego Movie** as opposed to the **Super Mario Bros** film. FMB



PLASTIC TOYS

After sleazy small-time dealer Jason becomes frustrated with his girlfriend, he is seduced by a gorgeous bartender and introduced to a rule-free world of sexual hedonism where no desire goes unsatisfied. As he is drawn in ever further and the drug-fuelled games of his new friends gradually intensify and become too much for him, he realises he is already in too deep to be able to escape. AM



DIE-GEST: FLESH FEAST

A horror anthology based around the theme of eating (Oh, it's a pun on 'digest'!), **Flesh Feast** was put together through shorts selected from an open submission call. So, as well as some traditional horror monsters renowned for their eating habits such as vampires, zombies, werewolves and cannibals, we can likely expect some innovative ideas from some up and coming filmmakers. AM

INDEPENDENCE DAY: RESURGENCE

Almost exactly twenty years after we first defeated them, the aliens are back in Roland Emmerich's sequel to his popular disaster movie. Though Will Smith won't reprise his role (he's 'too expensive', apparently), this film has succeeded where **Jurassic World** failed and got Jeff Goldblum back. So it can't be entirely terrible. Bill Pullman's also returning, and new cast members include Liam Hemsworth, Maika Monroe, Jessie Usher, and Sela Ward. You may have heard rumours about Emmerich wanting to form a trilogy; no further films have been confirmed yet, but if this does well, it probably won't be another twenty-year wait. KM



JUNE

ALSO RELEASED:
APOCALYPSE NERD
 LAKE JOHNSON
 CAGE
 THE SEED
 G.O.D. TECH
 TOO FAR



WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING

With over five million subscribers, **World of Warcraft** is the most popular MMORPG and the highest grossing video game of all time, so it's surprising that the movie adaptation has taken so long. The film sees the humans of Azeroth first face the Orcs of Draenor, who are fleeing their dying world and seeking a new home – and it's a meeting that's not going to end peacefully. Behind the camera is director Duncan Jones, whose lower-budget sci-fi flicks **Moon** and **Source Code** established him as a talented screen storyteller. We can't wait to see how he handles this much more epic material. KM

THE CONJURING 2: THE ENFIELD POLTERGEIST

Paranormal investigators Ed and Lorraine Warren (Patrick Wilson and Vera Farmiga) are back, this time investigating malevolent poltergeists haunting a house in Los Angeles. Director James Wan is at the helm again and is guaranteed to give us some scares. The original **Enfield Haunting** took place in England and was later found to be a fabrication of two imaginative teenage girls. It'll be interesting to see how Wan along with Carey and Chad Hayes and David Johnson (four writers - that's a bad sign there!) 'Americanise' this story. WSB



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES 2

Michael Bay's take on the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** was a pretty poor show. Unlike every other media, which drew upon the vast wealth of really cool and surreal ideas to create something unique and clever, Bay ignored the Turtles canon to create yet another CGI-based collection of explosions that bore a closer resemblance to a fireworks display at a wrestling match than anything connected to '80s super-hero franchises. With a new director and a Casey Jones-focused script promised, the sequel may be an improvement, but we aren't holding our breath. EF

JULY

ALSO RELEASED:

THE SHALLOWS

DEAD FRED

DESTINY'S CHILDREN

ICE AGE:
COLLISION COURSE



set photo

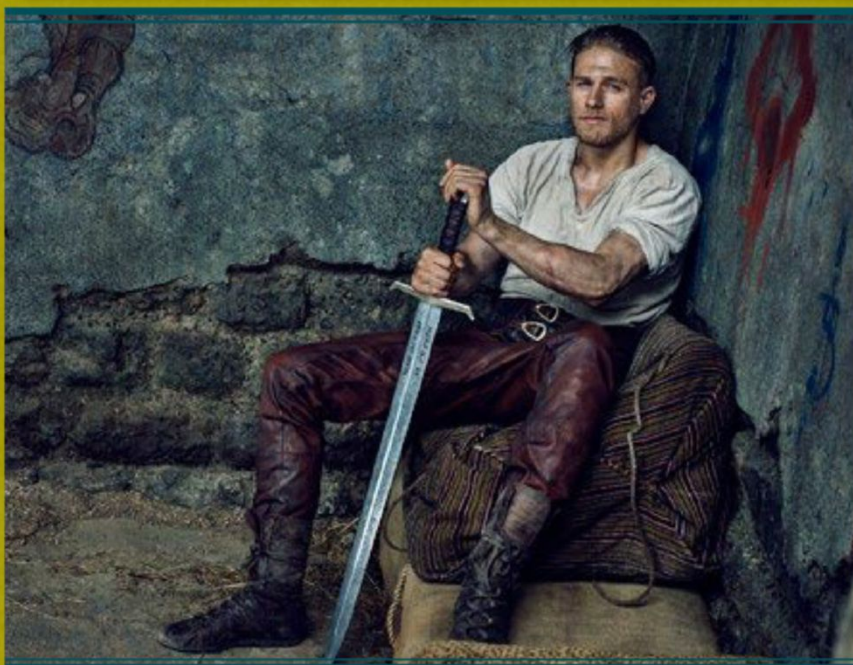
UNTITLED MATT DAMON/ BOURNE SEQUEL

As we've appropriately got a case of amnesia concerning the disappointing Jeremy Renner-starring **Bourne Legacy**, this is - to our minds at least - the fourth Bourne movie. After years of claiming they were done with the series, Matt Damon and director Paul Greengrass - who made both **Supremacy** and **Ultimatum** - are back for Jason Bourne's latest outing. Alongside the returning Julia Stiles, they're this time joined by Vincent Cassel, Tommy Lee Jones, and the ubiquitous Alicia Vikander. Plot details are currently locked in a CIA vault somewhere, but considering both Damon and Greengrass refused for years to return to the series unless they could find the right story, this looks to be a massive return to form after **Legacy**. Which, of course, we have no memory of. IR



GHOSTBUSTERS

There's a particularly misogynistic corner of the Internet that has been vocal in objecting to **Bridesmaids** director Paul Feig's brilliant-looking reboot, purely on the grounds that the new Ghostbusters are (shock!) female. Contrary to early rumours, Kristen Wiig and Melissa McCarthy - two of the funniest ladies in film right now - aren't playing new versions of the original's beloved characters. Instead, they play the co-authors of a book on the supernatural (and, in Wiig's case, a former professor) who form the all-new ghostbusting team. With a cast including relative newcomers Kate McKinnon and Leslie Jones alongside Chris Hemsworth and cameos from virtually all the original cast, **Ghostbusters** looks like a fun, not to mention suitably reverential, fresh take on a classic. IR



KNIGHTS OF THE ROUND TABLE: KING ARTHUR

We are quite excited by the idea of Guy Ritchie doing Arthurian fantasy. After all, who doesn't want to see **Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Dragons**? Details so far imply that Arthur and his knights are likely to be a gang of chums from the start, so we are expecting a lot of banter and some cinematic sword and sorcery action. This should be a breath of fresh air, given that fantasy movies have been stuck in with mud and grime for too long. With **Sons of Anarchy**'s Charlie Hunnam as Arthur, we are hoping for something less gritty and more fantastic. EF



set photo

STAR TREK BEYOND

In his classic sitcom **Spaced**, Simon Pegg once confidently stated that the odd-numbered **Star Trek** movies were, and we quote, "*shit*". Now, as co-writer of the Enterprise's thirteenth big-screen adventure, he's got a chance to rectify that (he's wrong anyway. **The Search for Spock** is an underrated classic). With J. J. Abrams poncing about in a galaxy far, far away, directing the franchise's 50th anniversary outing has fallen to Justin Lin, the man who turned **Fast and Furious** into one of the world's biggest franchises. With the mighty Idris Elba on villain duties, and an even more nonsensical title than last time, it's looking like **Beyond** will be a return to form following the lacklustre **Into Darkness**. IR



FINDING DORY

After this year's superb Pixar double whammy of **Inside Out** and **The Good Dinosaur**, 2016 sees the animation geniuses return to their traditional one film a year pattern. But when that film's a sequel to **Finding Nemo**, we'll forgive them. Set six months after the events of the first film, this time it's ultra-absent-minded Dory (voiced again by Ellen DeGeneres) who goes missing. After she - uncharacteristically - begins to remember her past, she sets off for California in search of her parents, hotly pursued by Nemo and his father Marlin (Albert Brooks). With a voice cast that includes Diane Keaton, Eugene Levy, Ty Burrell and the returning Willem Dafoe, this looks set to be more **Toy Story 2** than **Cars 2**. JR

THE PURGE 3

Little is known about the plot of the third film in the increasingly popular **The Purge** series, but from what we can tell it looks like it follows on, at least thematically, from the previous one. Frank Grillo is returning as the cool and deadly Sergeant, so we would expect the action to be ramped up even more, but there are so many plot options available for director James DeMonaco within this series that anything could happen. Something about the new Founding Fathers would be interesting, but whatever they've come up with we're sure it will be one of 2016's big successes. JT

THE BFG

Seminal Roald Dahl children's classic **The BFG** has languished in development hell for a quarter of a century. Once a project for the late Robin Williams, director Steven Spielberg and producers Frank Marshall and Kathleen Kennedy will finally bring the tale of Sophie and her adventures with the kind-hearted soul and outcast that is The Big Friendly Giant to multiplex's screens. **The BFG** also marks the reunion of Spielberg and E.T. screenwriter Melissa Mathison (who sadly died in November), as well as career-spanning musical collaborator John Williams, who was noticeably absent from Spielberg's latest cinematic release, **Bridge of Spies**. Expect increased sales of snozzcumbers. CJG



AUGUST

ALSO RELEASED:

SAUSAGE PARTY

HAPPY EVER AFTER

SUICIDE SQUAD

Given the hugely positive response to Marvel Studios' introduction of a ragtag bunch of characters who many may not have heard of (hey there, Guardians!), Warner Brothers look to expand their DC Cinematic Universe with David Ayer's **Suicide Squad**. Whilst the majority of the attention will be on Jared Leto's Joker, Margot Robbie's Harley Quinn and Will Smith's Deadshot, expect to see appearances from a whole host of DC characters, such as Amanda Waller, Enchantress, Captain Boomerang, King Shark, Rick Flag, Killer Croc, Katana, and even a certain Caped Crusader. AP



MECHANIC: RESURRECTION

Jason Statham returns in a sequel to that 2011 action movie you had completely forgotten about, in which he plays assassin Arthur Bishop, a killer with a speciality in making his hits look like accidents. Bishop thought he had left his life of murder for hire behind him, but when his lover is kidnapped, he is forced into carrying out a trio of assassinations, each of them a potential suicide mission. AM

A MAN IN THE DARK

A trio of teenage burglars riding high on a spree of successful robberies decide their next target will be a reclusive old blind man reputed to have millions of dollars stashed away throughout his home. However, upon intruding upon the dark domain, they are reminded that while an isolated old man might appear helpless, he will have survived being alone for very good reason. Before long, they find themselves hunted through a blackened maze by a merciless psychopath and must stay one step ahead of him if they want to survive. And a blind man is far more adept than them at moving through the darkness. AM

REAPERS SHADOW

After a devastating nuclear attack, England has been isolated from the rest of the world. No boats or planes enter or leave the country, and Scotland, Wales and Cornwall have separated themselves with giant walls running along their borders from one coast to the other. The only authority is corrupt martial law and the only constants are crime and death. Disparate lost souls converge on the town of Launceston right beside the Cornish wall, each of them hoping to attain the freedom they yearn for. AM

PETE'S DRAGON

Yep, this is a remake of that 1977 film. Plot-wise, the story centres on young Pete, an orphan who has the troubles of abusive foster parents to deal with and so seeks solace with his pet dragon. Mixing live action with animation, this redo will star Oakes Fegley as Pete, with him joined by a stellar cast that includes Oona Laurence, Robert Redford, Bryce Dallas Howard, Wes Bentley, and Karl Urban. AP

SPECTRAL

Described as 'a supernatural **Black Hawk Down**', **Spectral** takes place in New York after the city has been taken over by ghostly entities. To deal with the otherworldly threat, a specialised special-ops team is dispatched. AM

PATIENT ZERO

This upcoming zombie pandemic flick from Sony subsidiary Screen Gems looks like it could be a whole lot of fun. Apparently, the script by Mike Le is said to have a 'rich mythology' which is something often outright ignored in the zombie subgenre. The plot concerns a super-strain of rabies that has turned the majority of the global population into highly intelligent killers known as 'the infected'. Matt Smith (**Doctor Who**) is an asymptomatic carrier of the disease who can communicate with the infected and is seeking out a 'patient zero' in an attempt to find a possible cure. Natalie Dormer and Clive Standen also star and filming began in March 2015 in London. Keep an eye out for this one. FMB



SEPTEMBER

ALSO RELEASED:

THE REBORN

ALONE

A CURE FOR WELLNESS

set photo

HIPSTER MASSACRE

You know the sort; skinny jeans, moccasins (never to be worn with socks), immaculately groomed style-of-the-week hair, perfectly crafted beard to match the latest trend. The hipster is at its peak these days. You can't venture to your local town centre without seeing 100s of cooler-than-cool chaps in some variation of the exact same outfit. And so, **Hipster Massacre** could prove to be one of the favourites of many a horror fan next year. Plot-wise, a group of hipper-than-hip sorts attend a secret gig only to come under attack from a group of twisted cannibals. For this one, consider us cheering on the cannibals! AP

THE MAGNIFICENT SEVEN

First of all: why? Sure, it's got Chris Pratt, Denzel Washington, Vincent D'Onofrio, and Ethan Hawke and it's directed by Antoine Fuqua. Based on Akira Kurosawa's **Seven Samurai**, the John Sturges film remains a classic; so why remake a movie that was done right the first time? We all know the plot: seven gunfighters get together to save a village from marauding bandits. This is the same story and is also set in the Wild West. Some will live, some will die. How can you improve on Yul Brynner, Steve McQueen, Brad Dexter, Robert Vaughn, Charles Bronson, James Coburn, Horst Buchholz and the brilliant Eli Wallach playing the evil, man-you-love-to-hate, Calvera? WSB

OCTOBER

ALSO RELEASED:

MONSTER HIGH

INFERNO

MENTAL WEALTH

THE DARK RISING

TROLLS (ANIMATED)

ANOMALOUS: THE BIRTH

SLASHER HOUSE 2

THE BASEMENT

THE MANSION

TERROR TALES OF THE
CRIMSON CREEPER

ALLUSION

ESCAPE THE CITY

UNTITLED WHISPERS
SEQUEL

THE SHRIEKING HORROR



DOCTOR STRANGE

As Marvel Studios look to introduce more new characters to their cinematic realm, the Master of the Mystic Arts is set to make his big screen bow towards the end of 2016. Taking on the role of the Sorcerer Supreme will be Benedict Cumberbatch... because... Benedict Cumberbatch. We'll see Stephen Strange go from crippled former master surgeon to one of the most powerful, magical beings in the Marvel world as he's guided by Tilda Swinton's Ancient One. Other confirmed cast members are Michael Stuhlbarg as Doctor Nicodemus West and Chiwetel Ejiofor as the villainous Baron Mordo, with mystery roles for Rachel McAdams and Amy Landecker. AP

GAMBIT

After being stuck in development hell for what seems like a decade now, finally Remy LeBeau gets to take to the big screen in his own movie. After star Channing Tatum ummed and ahed about officially signing on for the lead role (which he finally *did* do), director Rupert Wyatt then departed the project. On the helming front, **Edge of Tomorrow**'s Doug Liman is the current favourite to replace Wyatt, with the only confirmed cast members being Tatum as the titular hero and Léa Seydoux as love interest/rogue Bella Donna Boudreaux. AP

OUIJA 2

In this inexplicable sequel from Mike Flanagan (**Oculus**) to the 2014 horror misfire, a young woman (Annalise Basso; **Oculus**) attempts to use the same Ouija board from the first movie to speak to her recently deceased father. From there, we can likely assume that an accompanying group of gormless teenage stereotypes will fail to heed the warning of the dangers of using the spirit-summoning board and inadvertently unleash some murderous ghostly entity that will begin to pick them off one by one in increasingly dramatic scenarios. AM

TAROT

The cruel and paranoid Duke of Milan has his wife executed for adultery to allow him to be with his mistress, and as a gift, commissions the first ever deck of Tarot cards. However, the painter of the cards, Michelino Molinari da Besozzo, was the lover of the Duchess and wove powerful blood magic into his elaborate artwork that vengeance might one day be attained. 600 years later, the stage is set for the magic to be released, and the key players of the Milanese tragedy will be reborn into the bodies of modern day people, threatening for history to quite literally repeat itself. AM

JACK REACHER 2: NEVER GO BACK

Former military cop Jack Reacher (Tom Cruise) returns to his hometown unit to meet Major Susan Turner, the intriguing voice on the phone who previously helped him out on an earlier case. The trouble begins, with Reacher accused of a murder 16 years ago and discovering that he has a teenage daughter living in Los Angeles. Ed Zwick directs from his own screenplay (written with Marshall Herskovitz) adapted from Lee Child's novel. Cruise has worked previously with Zwick, but this film could be a mixed bag of tricks as it's out of sequence in the series and he tends to overindulge as a director. WSB

METAMORPHOSIS AD

The secret police are just that, a force operating in the shadows who deal with otherworldly threats the regular police are ill-equipped to handle. When searching for a shapeshifter that had been on a killing spree, they discover that they are not the only ones searching for the creature, and that its presence is merely the herald of a much greater threat. AM

ROWENA GHOUL

Rowena Ghoul has a very special ability - she can reunite wandering ghosts with their loved one, allowing them to pass over. However, her actions anger a soul eater who survives by devouring the lost spirits, and the creature begins hunting her. Soon Rowena is on the run for her life, with only a headless ghost named Ambrose to aid her. AM

NINE

Nine young friends go on a camping trip to the woods, to indulge in some drunken and uninhibited shenanigans. However, one of them has brought along a Ouija board and the subsequent attempts to contact the other side have disastrous results. A portal opens up to somewhere particularly nasty, releasing ghostly girls and terrifying demon women, all of whom find the taste of human flesh rather appealing. AM

NOVEMBER

ALSO RELEASED:

THE PROJECTS:
RISE OF
REDEMPTION

DARK MATTER



FANTASTIC BEASTS AND WHERE TO FIND THEM

J. K. Rowling's **Fantastic Beasts** - the first in a new trilogy - sees the author return to the world of Harry Potter in this prequel which follows the adventures of fictional author Newt Scamander (Eddie Redmayne) in the 1920s. The first film sees Newt visit New York, where witches and wizards live in fear of their lives from the non-magic community (known in America as No-Maj, replacing the less threatening British term Muggle). When Newt's menagerie of magical creatures escapes, it places the wizarding community in jeopardy. Co-starring **Inherent Vice's** Katherine Waterston, Samantha Morton, Colin Farrell and **Hellboy** himself, Ron Perlman, **Fantastic Beasts** looks set to be a worthy successor to Potter. Expecto enormous box-office takings! IR

WHERE DEMONS HIDE

Alex Gilbert's **Where Demons Hide** promises to be an intense thrill ride when it arrives in late 2016. Starring Bobby Bulloch as a psychiatrist with some medical problems and a penchant for pills, the story progresses as Bulloch's character meets a girl who opens up his eyes and makes him realise that there's more to life than pill bottles and self-medicating. Unfortunately, this change of attitude leads to a path of anger, vengeance, and apparent justice as things take a turn for the dark. AP

DECEMBER

ALSO RELEASED:

BLAZE OF GORY

GOOD TIDINGS

UNGODLY SALVAGE



ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

The first of three Anthology movies set in a galaxy far, far away, Gareth Edwards' **Rogue One** looks to pick up the action after **Revenge of the Sith** and before **Star Wars** (or **A New Hope** to you modern sorts). Featuring a cast including the likes of Diego Luna, Mads Mikkelsen, Felicity Jones, Alan Tudyk, and Forest Whitaker, the plot follows a group of Rebels aiming to steal the plans for the Death Star (sound familiar?). Given that this is post-**Revenge of the Sith**, there's talk that Darth Vader may make an appearance, with speculation even suggesting that Hayden Christensen (yes, him!) is back as the Sith Lord. AP



ASSASSIN'S CREED

It's been a while since we've had a decent big-budget movie based on a video game, so we're keeping our fingers crossed for this one. Storyline details are thin on the ground at the moment, but we do know that the movie will follow the rough template provided by the games, with a modern-day hero (here played by Michael Fassbender) discovering his links to an ancient order of assassins and re-living the memories of his 15th Century Spanish ancestors to ultimately help him to battle the assassins' present-day rivals. No word yet on whether he'll also get stuck on scenery and dive into the sea when he was originally intending to run up a wall... We've still got a while to go before this one is released, so expect more info over the coming months. For now, file under 'cautiously optimistic'. CJA

MISS PEREGRINE'S HOME FOR PECULIAR CHILDREN

After his storyteller grandfather dies in mysterious circumstances, 16-year-old Jacob (Asa Butterfield, **Ender's Game**) sets out to discover more about the old man's life. He travels to an isolated island upon which is situated an orphanage for 'peculiar' children run by Miss Peregrine (Eva Green, **Sin City: A Dame to Kill For**) where his grandfather spent his childhood. Although the home acts as a haven for children with supernatural gifts, they are being hunted by monstrous creatures called hollows, and Jacob discovers that his own gift could be the only thing that could save them. AM

DANCE OF THE GOBLINS

Five generations after humanity was thrown back to the Dark Ages when the earth's magnetic pole shifted, the descendants of the survivors eke out an existence in the decaying rubble of what was once London. Beneath the capital's ruins, the goblins have risen from deep within the earth to claim the forgotten underground stations as their own, keeping out of sight of the humans. However, the sudden but inevitable discovery of the goblins threatens to break out into a full-scale war, each race believing it to be the only way to protect their world from the other. AM

CONTAMINATION

Jason Wright is a guy who really likes horror, so much so that after completing his degree in engineering he decided to screw his training and pursue his love for all things gory. Now creative director at Silent Studios, things are seemingly going to plan and shorts like **Torture** and **Infected** reflect an ethos dedicated to delivering gritty horror with a focus on visual effects. Wright's upcoming film **Contamination** is based on a story he wrote with Dave Jeffrey that is described as an 'infection instead of a zombie'. Journalist Dean Sharp wakes up in his home after a boozy night to see limb-dismembering chaos occurring outside his window and he has to piece together what the hell is going on. Sounds fun... FMB

**AGENT CARTER - SEASON TWO**

While Marvel's *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* has had uneven success, it seems everyone loved the first season of *Agent Carter*, which followed Hayley Atwell's Peggy Carter as she kicked the asses of both supervillains and the patriarchy in the wake of World War II.

With an extended run of ten episodes, Season Two relocates Carter to Los Angeles. There she'll face comics villain Madame Masque (Wynn Everett) and mafia boss Joseph Manfredi (Ken Marino). James D'Arcy, Chad Michael Murray and Enver Gjokaj all reprise their season one roles, as does, of course, Dominic Cooper – Peggy can never get rid of Howard Stark. KM

12 MONKEYS - SEASON TWO

Blunt and brutal time-travel TV shows are rather a rarity. Maybe it's the influence of more whimsical shows such as *Doctor Who*, but shows that treat time-travel as a way of mankind averting its own dark fate don't tend to fare well with the science-fiction watching public. *12 Monkeys* may well break this pattern, as it has gotten itself a second series. Unlike the movie, the TV version is more about paradox and the consequences of heroism than anything else. The second series promises more of the same, and the show's producers are in no hurry to reveal any of the secrets of the 12 Monkeys. Is this enough to keep us watching? Time will tell. EF

ALIENS

E4 have done pretty well so far with intelligent genre comedy (such as *Misfits*) and *Aliens* promises to do what E4 does best; take a high concept idea and do it well on a fairly low budget. The premise of *Aliens* is that people from another planet (who resemble us) have been living on Earth for around 40 years. They look like us, but have been exiled to a ghetto called Troy. The show focuses on the misadventures of a gormless border guard (Michael Socha) and a witty alien (Michaela Coel). It's written by Fintan Ryan, who gave us *Never Better* and *In the Flesh*, so this is one to look out for. EF

ARROW - SEASON FIVE

The fifth season of The CW's Emerald Archer-centric show is set to arrive in the final quarter of 2016, with an endless amount of possibilities surrounding the now *Green Arrow*. As we go to print, there's the mystery over who's bitten the bullet and was buried at the gravesite that Oliver Queen was visiting during the current season, meaning somebody won't be back for Season Five. Then there's what's next for Team Arrow after Damien Darhk is taken care of. Given the use of magic and meta-humans in Star City these days, all bets are off where *Arrow*'s concerned! AP

BATES MOTEL - SEASON FOUR

Whilst Freddie Highmore's Norman Bates won't be returning until an unconfirmed 2016 date, the fact that A&E has already confirmed a fourth and fifth season shows just how much faith the network has in this eerie and fantastic series. Now that we're at full-on 'mother' mode for Norman, things are only set to get darker and more twisted for the inhabitants of White Pine Bay. If the excellent storytelling and spellbinding performances from the likes of Highmore, Vera Farmiga, Nestor Carbonell, Max Thieriot and Olivia Cooke can be maintained, *Bates Motel* is set to continue on its path to becoming a modern-day television masterpiece. AP

BETTER CALL SAUL - SEASON TWO

It took the whole first season for James

McGill (Bob Odenkirk) to decide to become, as Jesse Pinkman would later put it, a *criminal lawyer*. His morality's now firmly out of the picture – but there's still a long way to go before he's the Saul Goodman who fans of **Breaking Bad** know and love.

Plot details are thin on the ground, but we can expect to see returns from hard man Mike (Jonathan Banks) and Jimmy's brother Chuck (Michael McKean), as well as a larger role for drug dealer Nacho (Michael Mando). The prequel series will continue to air on Netflix in the UK. KM

BITTEN

A series of murders forces Elena, the world's only female werewolf, to return home to the Pack she left behind in order to attempt a normal life with a human boyfriend. Unaligned werewolves are recruiting an army from sadists, murderers, psychopaths and paedophiles, and what first appears to be a campaign of meaningless slaughter is soon revealed to be a calculated power play to oust the Pack from their position of dominance and take revenge for perceived past injustices. AM

BLACK MIRROR – SERIES THREE

Charlie Brooker's satirical anthology series got a surprising publicity boost this September when a certain news story resembled a much-loved episode involving the British Prime Minister and a pig. Not that it needed the boost, as a new twelve-episode run had already been commissioned. We know next to nothing about the new stories at this point, though with Brooker working on the scripts and Netflix producing, they'll no doubt be as dark and challenging as ever. Let's just hope all twelve of them don't come true... KM

CLASS

Recent series of **Doctor Who** have seen Clara Oswald teaching in Coal Hill, a school familiar to long-term viewers from the very first episode back in 1963. The same school will be further explored in this brand new spin-off from acclaimed YA author Patrick Ness.

Class doesn't star any established *Who* characters (à la **Torchwood** and **The Sarah Jane Adventures**), but focuses on a new group of heroes who fight off alien invasions in their lunch break between studying for



BEING HUMAN

Throw together a vampire, a werewolf and a ghost as housemates and you've got the basic premise of fantastical horror of sorts, **Being Human**. A retelling of the UK series of the same name, the US version of the show features **Smallville's** Sam Witwer, **Superman Returns'** (and, for the KISS Army out there, **Detroit Rock City's**) Sam Huntington, and **Banshee's** Meaghan Rath in the main roles, and has proved even more popular in the US than its UK cousin did over here, even if it has now come to a close over the pond after finishing its fourth season. AP

their A-levels.

To be broadcast on BBC Three, we can expect to see eight 45-minute episodes – that's enough to fit a Doctor cameo in somewhere, right? KM

DC'S LEGENDS OF TOMORROW

Not content with the huge success of **Arrow** and **The Flash**, The CW has another shared universe show on the way for early 2016 in the form of **DC's Legends of Tomorrow**. With the immortal time-travelling threat of Vandal Savage to contend with, Arthur

Darvill's Rip Hunter puts together the ragtag team of Brandon Routh's Atom, Caity Lotz's White Canary, Victor Garber and Franz Drameh's Firestorm, Ciara Renee's Hawkgirl, Falk Hentschel's Hawkman, Wentworth Miller's Captain Cold and Dominic Purcell's Heat Wave. If the standards of *Arrow* and *The Flash* can be met, The CW is on to yet another winner. AP

DOCTOR WHO – SERIES TEN

Like a dying Dalek in a thunderstorm, the Moffat-led **Doctor Who** struggles on, despite another frustratingly uneven series under its belt. Despite this, a certain speech in **The Zygon Inversion** has surely made all the doubters fall in love with Capaldi's Doctor, meaning that whatever Series Ten delivers, we'll welcome the Twelfth Doctor back with open arms. With the added departure of the sadly misused Clara, the slate could be wiped clean, suggesting there's life in the old TARDIS yet. FM

GALAVANT

After his lady love Madalena left him for the villainous King Richard, the manly hero Galavant became a washed up drunk. Sometime later, he is hired by the feisty Princess Isabella to face the evil but somewhat gormless monarch, who has conquered the kingdom of her parents. As they journey through a joyfully daft

COLONY

Set in a gone-to-hell future (because aren't all shows these days?), **Colony** focuses on a family who have to deal with trying to survive in a world filled with conflict, uprising, and the ever-powerful and ruthless authorities. Starring **Lost's** Josh Holloway (remember Sawyer?) and **The Walking Dead's** Sarah Wayne Callies (Rick Grimes' died-in-childbirth Mrs), not to mention the likes of Thora Birch, Peter Jacobson and Amanda Righetti, the early word and buzz surrounding **Colony** suggests that it could quickly become one of your favourite shows of 2016. AP



fantasy realm, no fairy tale cliché will remain unparodied, while regular song and dance numbers spontaneously break out three times an episode. AM

GAME OF THRONES – SEASON SIX

Well, Season Five was a little hit and miss wasn't it? The battle at Hardhome – Big Hit. The SandSnakes – Big Miss. After David and Dan played fast and loose with their source material (Jaime in Dorne?!), it looks like S6 could perhaps be revisiting some forgotten story lines from *A Feast For Crows*, notably the siege of Riverrun. There have also been strong rumours regarding the inclusion of the fan favourite Tower of Joy battle, which as recounted by Ned in *AGOT*, is one of the most discussed skirmishes in the series. Exciting stuff. Seeing as S5 ended pretty much where the books currently are up to, prepare yourselves for a barrage of new content that will most likely include the White Walkers marching south. Winter is well and truly coming. FMB

HUMANS – SERIES TWO

Channel 4's *Humans* was both a critical and commercial success when it aired this summer, so it's no surprise that a second batch of eight episodes was soon commissioned. Like a cross between *Blade Runner* and *Eastenders*, *Humans* follows various characters in a world very much resembling modern-day England – except for the fact that androids, or 'synths', are commonly available. In the second series, the technology is developing fast, with synths moving into new areas of employment, and not all humans are happy about that. All the first series' main characters, including the Hawkins family, will return, alongside a new set of villains. KM

IRON FIST

Iron Fist is the story of Danny Rand, an expert martial artist who gains the magical, mystical power of the, you



DAMIEN

Given the hugely positive response to *Bates Motel* and *Hannibal* (even if that *did* get unceremoniously cancelled), the next famed horror franchise to be brought to the small screen is *The Omen*. A&E's *Damien* stars *Merlin*'s Bradley James as the titular Damien Thorn. Now a 30-year-old war photographer with no recollection of his demonic past, the series follows Damien as he is faced with the truth about who he really is: the Antichrist. Here's hoping this *Omen*-lite show can hit the stylish, dramatic heights of *Bates Motel* and *Hannibal* and that James can match Freddie Highmore and Mads Mikkelsen. AP

guessed it, *Iron Fist*. Initially announced as part of Marvel's Netflix-exclusive MCU-set shows, joining *Daredevil*, *Jessica Jones*, and *Luke Cage*, recent stories have been speculating that *Iron Fist* may actually get scrapped before it gets going. Whilst we'd love to see the show happen, with Ryan Phillippe at one point touted for the lead role, it's believed that the powers that be are now hesitant to move forward with the show due to its magical themes. AP

iZOMBIE – SEASON 2

When adapting a comic book series, it's often a bad sign if the screen version deviates wildly from the source material. *iZombie* is the exception that proves the rule, however. The comics were deeply inspired by ancient Egypt and had all sorts of wacky unnatural creatures running around; a direct version would have been a sub-par copy of *Supernatural*. Instead, the show keeps the core idea that brain eating zombies can 'read' the memories of the grey matter they consume. The result is a strong action

adventure detective thriller which will delight horror and comic fans alike. EF

LIMITLESS

Brian Finch (Jake McDorman, *Shameless US*) is your average 28-year-old slacker until he stumbles across NZT, a drug that temporarily enhances a person's brainpower to its maximum capacity, lands himself a job consulting for the FBI and finds an ally in Agent Rebecca Harris (Jennifer Carpenter, *Dexter*). Although the drug comes with invariably fatal side effects, Brian is blackmailed for inoculations against them by Senator Edward Morra (Bradley Cooper reprising his role from the 2011 film from which this series follows) who wants a set of eyes within the Bureau for his own reasons. AM

LUCIFER

Loosely based on Mike Carey's comic book series of the same name, the Prince of Hell has become bored with his rule over the kingdom of the damned and abdicates his throne to travel to the world of men.

Gotham - Season 3

Although the UK has yet to see the second (it's due early 2016), Season Three of *Gotham* is set to arrive towards the end of the year. It will serve to again further the story of Jim Gordon, Bruce Wayne and Gotham City itself. Expect to see young Master Bruce continue to make strides towards a certain Dark Knight persona, whilst Gordon will again be doing his best to clean up the ever-dirty streets of the city that he calls home. Given how the show has introduced regular DC names throughout its run so far, it's certain that plenty of more familiar Bat-foes will be on the way for Season Three, including a prominent role for the Clown Prince of Crime himself, The Joker. AP





KILLJOYS

In the far-flung future on a distant planetary system of the Quad, bounty hunters Dutch, John and D'avin live uninhibited lives in between chasing down dangerous criminals and fugitives. Over time, ghosts from their shady pasts begin to resurface as a class war between the factions of the rigidly stratified interplanetary society threatens to break out. A mix of sci-fi, action, drama and comedy, *Killjoys* is probably about as close as we're ever going to get to a replacement for the much-missed *Firefly*. AM

Becoming a consultant for the NYPD, he uses his talent for compelling the truth from people and exposing their sins, all the while being hounded by archangels to return to his duty and deal with any evil souls that have escaped in his absence. AM

LUKE CAGE

The third series set in Netflix's grittier corner of the Marvel Cinematic Universe follows Mike Colter's Luke Cage, who we've already seen alongside Jessica Jones in her eponymous series. A fugitive ex-con who gained superhuman strength after a failed experiment, Cage attempts to rebuild his life while fighting crime in Harlem - but faces a battle that will make him confront his past.

With Cheo Hodari Coker (who's written for *Almost Human* and *Ray Donovan*) in place as showrunner, *Luke Cage* also stars Mahershala Ali (*The 4400*, *Mockingjay*) as nightclub owner Cottonmouth, newcomer Simone Missick as Police Detective Misty Knight, and Theo Rossi (*Sons of Anarchy*) as manipulative criminal Shades. KM

MINORITY REPORT

Precrime was a division of the Washington DC police department built around a trio of psychic siblings who foresaw murders, allowing the perpetrators to be arrested before committing the acts, but the division was disbanded after the system was proved fallible (in the 2002 movie of the

same name). One of the psychics, Dash, remains haunted by visions of death he can do nothing to prevent, so he ends up working with detective Lara Vega to investigate the murders he sees and try to save the victims before they meet their predicted violent ends. AM

OUTLANDER - SEASON TWO

Having fled Scotland and now living in Paris, Claire and Jamie try to prevent the upcoming Jacobite uprising and the carnage of the Battle of Culloden in which it will inevitably culminate. King Louis XV is providing financing to Bonnie Prince Charlie to fund the uprising and then to take back the Scottish throne, and within the French aristocracy, the couple attempt to subvert the funds for the rebellion, only to discover that the sadistic Randall followed them over the channel. AM

POWERS

Powers is set in a world where superhumans are common and are the rock stars of popular culture. Detective Christian Walker was formerly the hero Diamond until his powers were stolen by 'Big Bad' Wolfe, his old mentor who became an unstable serial killer. Working in the Powers Division of the police department, which deals with crimes involving superhumans, Walker investigates the source of a mysterious street drug that is killing both humans and superhumans alike, which has links to Royalle, a teleporting criminal previously thought dead. AM

PREACHER

Reverend Jesse Custer (Dominic Cooper, *Captain America*, *Agent Carter*) becomes bonded with Genesis, the unholy offspring of an angel and a demon, at which time God disappears. Together with his gun-toting girlfriend Tulip (Ruth Negga, *Misfits*, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*) and whisky-soaked Irish punk vampire Cassidy (Joseph Gilgun, *Misfits*, *This Is England*), Jesse embarks on a road trip across the heart of America to hunt down the Almighty and hold him accountable for his failings towards his creations. Opposing them are all-powerful secret organisation The Grail and its megalomaniacal enforcer Herr Starr, and the Saint of Killers, an unstoppable death machine in the form of a nightmare gunslinger from the Old West come to life. AM

RED DWARF - SEASON 11

Despite being in the works for a while now, a new season of the award-winning *Red Dwarf* is finally on the way for 2016. Not only that but two new seasons are being filmed back-to-back, with a twelfth season set to air in 2017. The principal cast of Craig Charles, Chris Barrie, Danny John-Jules, and Robert Llewellyn are reprising their roles of Lister, Rimmer, Cat, and Kryten respectively, with further space adventures ahead for our familiar ragtag crew. It'll be a tall ask, but let's hope that these new seasons can capture some of the magic of the classic *Red Dwarf* of yesteryear. AP

RICK AND MORTY - SEASON THREE

The further adventures of the cynical,

misanthropic, alcoholic mad scientist Rick and his long-suffering grandson and sidekick Morty. Expect more scathing sarcasm, deadpan cynicism, self-referential running jokes, dimension hopping, travel to the distant corners of the universe and general high-concept sci-fi rigmarole. Seriously, if you're yet to experience this glorious and demented animated series then get caught up as soon as possible. You will not be disappointed. AM

SECOND CHANCE (AKA LOOKINGGLASS, AKA THE FRANKENSTEIN CODE)

Jimmy Pritchard, a 75-year-old former sheriff who was forced into retirement after the extent of his corruption was revealed, is killed by a mysterious assailant. After his corpse is taken by the billionaire twin sibling owners of a bioengineering company, they use pioneering experimental technology to resurrect him, reborn into a young body. Given a new chance at life, he embarks on a quest for redemption to atone for the sins of his past and search for his killer, all the while tempted by the dubious morality that led to his disgrace. AM

SHADOWHUNTERS

Adapted from Cassandra Clare's popular YA novel saga *The Mortal Instruments* (the



THE SHANNARA CHRONICLES

With the success of *Game of Thrones*, it was inevitable that other fantasy epics would get adapted for television. The *Shannara* books are set on a world where a terrible apocalypse happened long ago. The Four Lands host the sort of sword-slinging, fireball-generating heroes that you expect from a fantasy epic. That is, until some idiot unleashes all the demons on the land. Expect elves, pretty locations, great set pieces and the sound of distant outrage from fans of the books, because they've changed quite a few things to make this all filmable. EF



WESTWORLD

Michael Crichton's 1973 **Westworld** movie is a favourite of many, and so the idea of a remake in the form of a television show was one that took some warming to. Luckily though, this HBO series has gone about getting a mighty fine cast together, which is always a good start. The ever-brilliant Ed Harris is on board to play the show's Gunslinger, the android cowboy made famous by Yul Brynner in the original movie (and sequel **Futureworld**), and he's joined by the likes of Anthony Hopkins, James Marsden, Ben Barnes, Ingrid Bolsø Berdal, Valiant Michael, and Clifton Collins Jr. AP

first of which was also the basis for the film of the same name) **Shadowhunters** follows the fifteen-year-old Clary. She grew up believing she was a normal girl, but after her mother is abducted she learns she is one of the Nephilim, a race of warriors calling themselves Shadowhunters who battle monsters in an eternal war hidden from ordinary humans. As she is brought into the shadowy world by a group of teenage fighters, they become embroiled in the search for a former Shadowhunter leader with plans to overthrow the current order. AM

STAR TREK: CONSTELLATION

What's that lurking in system L-374? Is it the new **Star Trek** TV series recently announced by CBS? Not exactly. **Star Trek: Constellation** is a fan-based project with a difference. The difference being that these fans are professionals within the film/TV industry. Producer Joe Geragi (**Kottentail**), associate producer Mark Casadei (**Happy Hour**) and director Tymaine Clay (executive producer for the upcoming **When the Fever Breaks**) hope to thrill us with the exploits of the USS Constellation and its encounter with the planet-destroying cream horn in this prequel/sequel to the **Star Trek: TOS** episode **The Doomsday Machine**. Prepare for impact! CJ

STITCHERS

Kirsten is a brash and abrasive student, the result of a rare neurological disorder that renders her unable to perceive the passage of time. However, it also means she is one of only a few people alive capable of being

a 'stitcher', someone who, through the use of experimental technology, can have their consciousness inserted ('stitched') into the fading memories of the recently deceased to look for clues to murders. Soon afterwards Kirsten learns that her father was one of the technology's pioneers and that his disappearance when she was a young girl might have more significance than she thought. AM

THE FLASH - SEASON THREE

So far, **The Flash**'s second season has made for some phenomenal viewing as uber-villain Zoom runs roughshod over Barry Allen. The concept of the Multiverse is now in play, which opens up a ridiculous amount of possibilities for the show's third year; literally anybody who is dead can be alive, anybody who is good can be bad, etc. Whilst sister show **Arrow** may have took a good few months to find its feet, **The Flash** hit the ground running and has set the bar high for itself, meaning expectations are plentiful for Season Three. AP

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

Victorian era occult group The Society for Psychical Research is the focus of **The Living and the Dead**, a period drama that mixes the social upheaval of the turn of the 19th century with ghosts and myths, poltergeists and demons. Caught up in all of this is Nathan Appleby, a reluctant gentleman farmer who is obsessed with proving the existence of the afterlife. Produced by BBC Wales, we expect this to be a very British sort of supernatural drama. EF

THE MAGICIANS

Based on Lev Grossman's very successful series of novels, **The Magicians** have a very simple premise; what if all the magic from your favourite fantasy novels was real? Then what if all of that power threatened your way of life? A modern day fantasy drama, this should be a mix of mystery and fireball-sliding weirdness. EF

THE MESSENGERS

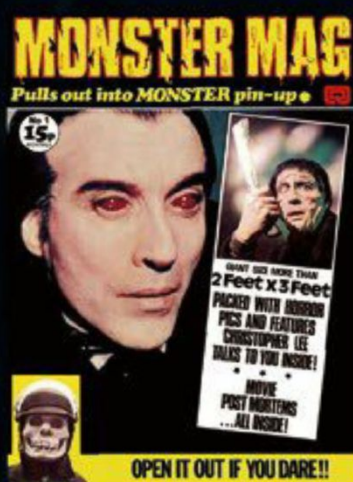
Following a mysterious meteor strike, a group of strangers awake with supernatural powers. After they are brought together, they discover that they are the Angels of the Apocalypse, chosen to test if humanity is worth being saved. The Angels must locate the people the Devil is attempting to tempt into becoming the apocalyptic Horseman by committing great sins and breaking biblical seals, which unless they are stopped will bring about the Rapture and end of the world. AM

THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO - SEASON TWO

With the show being sold to over 40 countries and Tracy Island being the No.1 toy this Christmas, this new incarnation of Thunderbirds is doing just fine with the strings cut. The half-CGI/half-model reboot of the seminal puppet series bagged its second series rather early on, and with rumours flying high that it promises to be somewhat darker than the rollicking Season One, **Thunderbirds Are Go** looks like it'll continue to be a blast of fresh adventure with no strings attached. FM

Previews written by Andrew Marshall, Kieron Moore, Andrew Pollard, Ed Fortune, Fred McNamara, Ford Maddox Brown, John Townsend, Chris Jackson (CJa), Whitney Scott Bain, Iain Robertson, and Christian Jones (CJo).

IT'S STILL 1977 AND LOOK WHO'S BACK!



THE WORLD'S FIRST FULL COLOUR HORROR FILMS MAGAZINE

...JUST WON'T STAY DEAD! Launched in 1973, its second issue was banned by Her Majesty's Customs and Excise and every copy was destroyed (making it also the world's RAREST magazine!). But it survived this setback and kept on coming until 1976 when its editor found a new toy and launched House of Hammer. Well now it's risen from its grave and continued where it left off, with the original editor finally putting together the long-promised **Double X** issue AND a gap-filling English language printing of issue 2. And more besides (check out *The Hammer Lovers* main man Matt, left, modelling just one of the three posters in issue #20!). Join us on our magic journey... back to the 1970s!



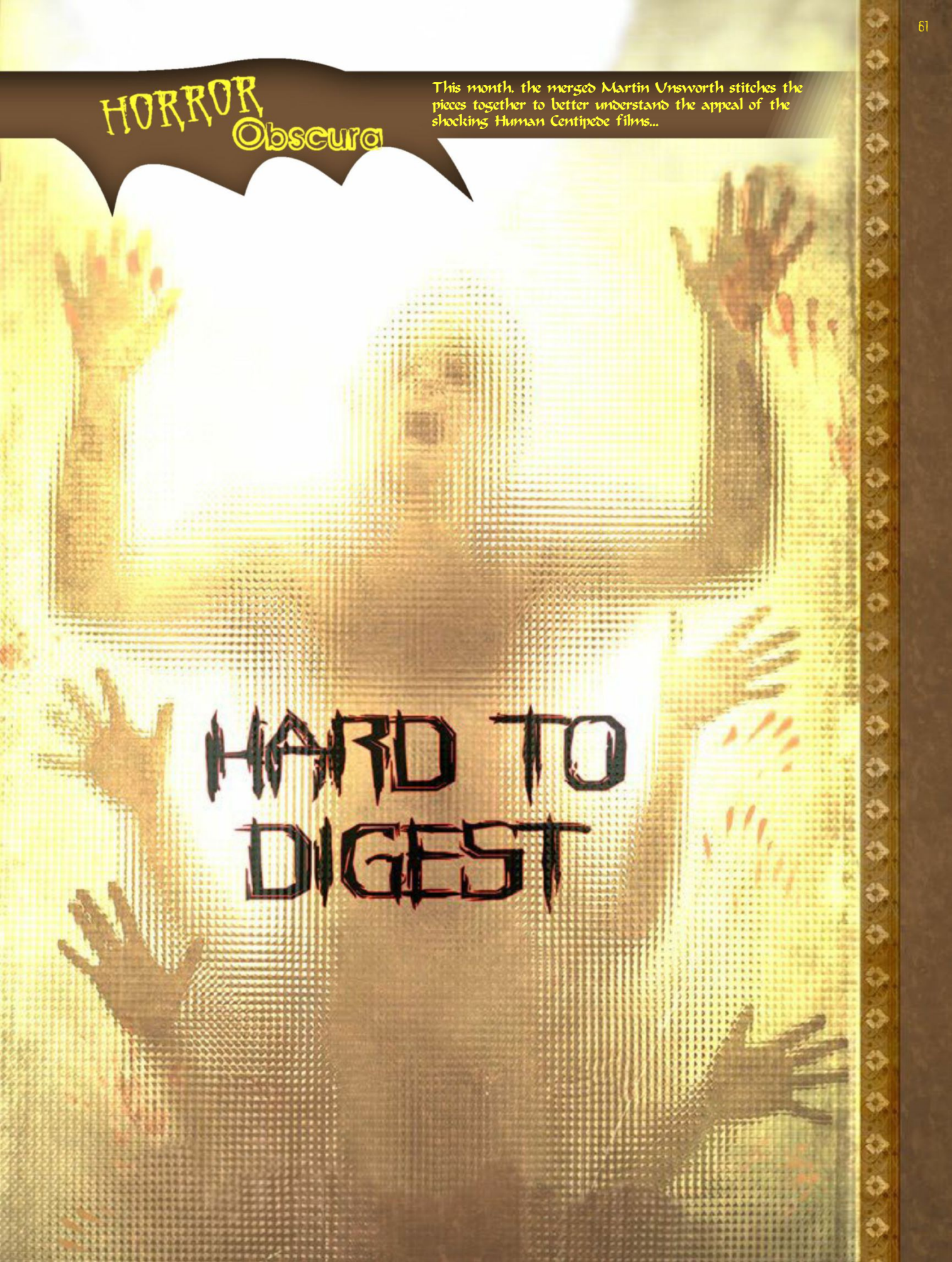
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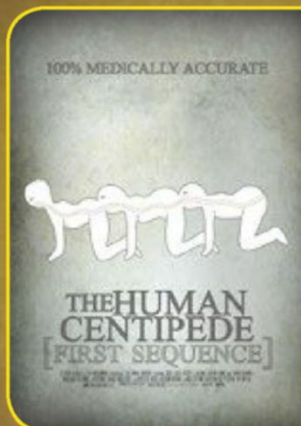
OPEN IT OUT IF YOU DARE!

HORROR Obscura

This month, the merged Martin Unsworth stitches the pieces together to better understand the appeal of the shocking Human Centipede films...

HARD TO DIGEST





We've covered controversial and banned films in the past, and attitudes change towards them all the time. Just think of the old 'video nasty' panic – many of those movies are now available in the UK fully uncut. What's more remarkable is the amount of once-censored and contentious films that have appeared on UK TV. Lucio Fulci's *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, Tobe Hooper's seminal *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* and even *Snuff*, the re-titled schlock film that purported to have killed someone on screen has made it to Film4. January will see UK's Horror Channel celebrate even more ground-breaking screenings with their latest season of extreme cinema.

Although the third instalment was (finally) released this year, following a protracted distribution wrangle, the first two films of *The Human Centipede* series are still regarded as a test of one's mettle when it comes to gruelling cinema. We celebrated the release of the third film in STARBURST # 412 by talking to director Tom Six and series stars Dieter Laser and Laurence R. Harvey, but with *First Sequence* and *Full Sequence* appearing on UK TV this January (the latter for the very first time),

we figured now was a good a time as any to stitch together the importance of Six's films in respect of keeping transgressive filmmaking both alive and, indeed, accessible and surprisingly commercial.

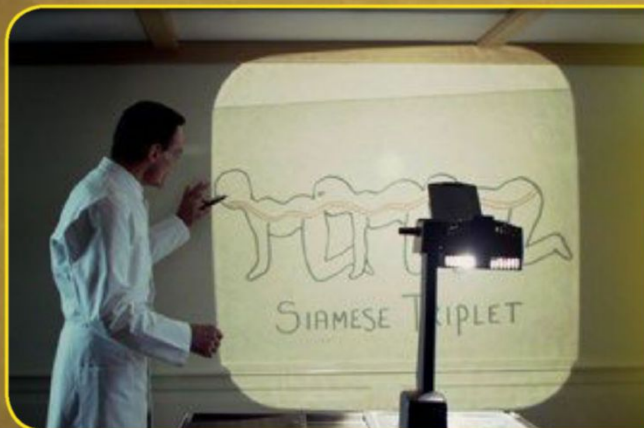
When Six released the first *Centipede* film in 2009, the buzz of the trailer and the premise sent horror fans into overdrive. This was an idea so sick and twisted that it just had to be seen! The anticipation was palpable, with some vocal repulsion voiced even before the film hit the screens. Six, of course, revelled in the controversy, and the *First Sequence* became an instant cult hit.

Although essentially it's a simple 'mad scientist' plot, the depiction of the suffering and humiliation of the three unfortunate victims, abducted by Doctor Josef Heiter (Laser) and subjected to his gross medical experiment, transcended almost everything that had been seen in cinema before.

The style of the film is as equally disturbing as the subject and visuals. As writer and director, Tom Six wove an engaging and sickening story into

something at once fascinating and utterly unsettling. The setup is similar to a standard horror film. Two American tourists – Lindsay (Ashley C. Williams) and Jenny (Ashlynn Yennie) – are stranded on a deserted German lane when their rented car gets a puncture. Finding an isolated house, they ask for help to get the mechanics out. Unfortunately, they've happened upon the house of the not-so-good Doctor Heiter, a former surgeon who specialised in separating Siamese twins. Drugged and bound, they would have been better off taking up the salacious offer from the sleazy German who pulled up beside their stricken car! Another victim is a burly trucker who is captured early in the film, and is literally caught with his pants down as he pays nature's call. Unfortunately for him, he's not a match for the two ladies, so is 'put down', to be replaced by another, Katsuro (Akihiro Kitamura).

Doctor Heiter's passion – and the reason he has the three captives – is to create a three-person living organism, essentially a centipede, all sharing the same digestive tract. To do this, he snaps the ligaments in the knees of the three, so that they will





never be able to stand, and only be on all fours. Then he meticulously stitches their mouths to the anus of the person in front. Katsuro gets to be the 'head' of the centipede, bearing the weight, and despite his best attempts, he can't hold things in for long and loses control of his bowels, causing the natural response from middle section - Lindsay, who was given that position as she had attempted to escape - and making Heiter shriek with glee "Feed her! Feed her!"

Heiter is actually a sensitive artist, as we discover when he cries with joy at his macabre creation. In fact, he still mourns his earlier attempt, as we see at the start of the film when he sombrely looks at a photograph of a set of Rottweilers that had been stitched together. He is, of course, barking mad himself. His demeanour goes from reasoned to psychotic in the blink of an eye, and this is none more obvious than when a pair of policemen come calling. He is almost provoking them to discover his secret; it's a tense and fascinating sequence.

Which brings us to another quality of Tom Six's film: it's incredibly well made.

No matter what one might think of the subject, it's shot and executed in masterful fashion. We actually don't have that much in the way of gore on show, really. Other than the depiction of the operation, in which teeth are removed and the buttocks of one of the victims are sliced open with two bloodied flaps revealed that will be stitched to the face of the unfortunate person behind, the odd bit of flesh wounds and the like, there's no really graphic visceral horror. That didn't stop an outcry from 'moral guardians' and others when it was released, but that just cemented things in Tom Six's head for the direction he wanted to go...

With all the controversy prompted by the first instalment, Six was certain that the sequel would have to be even more horrible, more outrageous, and definitely more offensive. He even made a funny teaser trailer saying as much when he introduced the new film's star (albeit wearing a cardboard box on his head). In this short taster, Six is seen thinking to himself about how horrible people think he is, and that he must go further than anyone has ever done before. These words were actually spoken by the star of the film, unseen apart from

the aforementioned boxed appearance, Laurence R. Harvey. "Too many people are saying it's like *My Little Pony*" the voiceover says, before revealing the 'sickest bastard ever' in the shape of Harvey's Martin.

Harvey had been a successful performance artist, and was actually a regular on UK Saturday morning children's television at one point, but it was his casting as Martin Lomax, the constantly sweating and wheezing overweight antagonist of the second *Centipede* film, that would catapult him to being a modern horror icon.

Perhaps the most shocking aspect of the second film, *Full Sequence*, is the decision to make the story about a fan of the first film. Movies with a 'meta' aspect are not new; indeed the late Wes Craven's *Scream* series made that almost a focal point. The characters *knew* that the films in the real world existed, and made constant reference to them. In the case of Martin, his point of reference is one film only: the first *Human Centipede*. He's not so much a fan of the movie as an obsessive. A troubled man, abused by his father as a child, and whose mother blames him for the paternal figure





leaving; he is completely absorbed by Six's gruesome masterpiece. He watches it every day during his mundane job as a security guard in an underground parking lot. His scrapbook contains cuttings about the film, and crude drawings of how he himself would create an even bigger centipede.

Naturally, not having the medical knowledge or indeed intelligence of Dr Heiter, Martin's attempts at kidnap and surgery are crude to say the least. Although he is clever enough to pretend to be an agent for Quentin Tarantino in order to trick the first film's original star Ashlynn Yennie to travel over and meet him in the hope of a big acting role. Unfortunately for her, her starring role will be take place in a grubby lock-up, as part of Martin's makeshift centipede. Using gaffer tape, staples and a crowbar, he connects a series of victims - mostly people who have crossed him or disrespected him in some form - and gleefully enjoys the fruits of his labours. Until of course, they begin to fight back, as a blow to the head as anaesthetic will only last so long.

This second movie would run into all kinds

of problems with the BBFC. Originally, they banned it outright, even going so far as to post a spoiler-filled synopsis on their website with reasons why they couldn't award a certificate. Six was livid, as were fans. We hadn't really had a problem with censorship since the 'bad old days' of the video nasty. He eventually agreed to allow the film to be cut, and it's this shortened version that exists in the UK now, unfortunately. Over two and a half minutes were excised, and although it in no way suffers - it's still just as distressing and gruesome - it's a shame that it can't be enjoyed in its full gory glory.

And it is a fantastic film. Certainly not an easy movie to watch, but like *First Sequence*, it has a cinematic quality that makes it stunningly engaging. Whereas the first was impeccably filmed, the second has a true sense of sleaze and nastiness. By releasing it in black and white (a recent US box set actually includes a colour version for the first time), there's a surreal quality to the events, which make the denouement all the more potent. It does take a very strong stomach and a rather warped sense of humour to fully appreciate it, though.

The third movie, *Final Sequence*, was released in 2015 after much wrangling with distributors. Again, it polarised audiences. Some saw the unique brilliance of Tom Six (it has even made it into the STARBURST Top 40 Films of the Year - see page 75) while others dismissed it as offensive tosh. The correct answer to that dilemma is, of course, that it doesn't matter who is right, as long as we have the right to choose to see it or not.

On the DVD release of the final film, there's a brilliant unused climax that ties all the films together in a perfect circle, and it's well worth checking out as it completes the series perfectly, even if it isn't the 'official' ending.

If you haven't seen the *Human Centipede* films and you have the stomach for them, give them a shot - but make sure you have an open mind and an empty stomach. ✦

THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE FIRST SEQUENCE and *FULL SEQUENCE* are screening in January on Horror Channel SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70 and Freeview 138.





INDEPENDENTS DAY

by Martin Unsworth

ADAM J. SPINKS

This month, we chat to the writer/director of a new low-budget end-of-civilisation zombie film. Although *SURVIVORS* is far from the usual gore-filled fare, instead presenting the viewer with a human story that is as absorbing as it is terrifying...



STARBURST: What inspired you to be a film director/screenwriter?

Adam J. Spinks: I always liked movies! My VHS copy of *Jurassic Park* got watched so many times I actually wore out the cassette! As a kid, I got really attached to certain films and would re-watch them over and over again, just absorbing everything in them. It probably started there!

How did you go about raising the budget for *Survivors*?

About two thirds of the budget was raised through crowd-funding platforms in 2012, around 200 people pledged towards our campaigns and, since seeing the film, their feedback has been wonderful. I'm really glad we could make them proud of getting involved!

What drew you to the zombie genre, and the pseudo-documentary style?

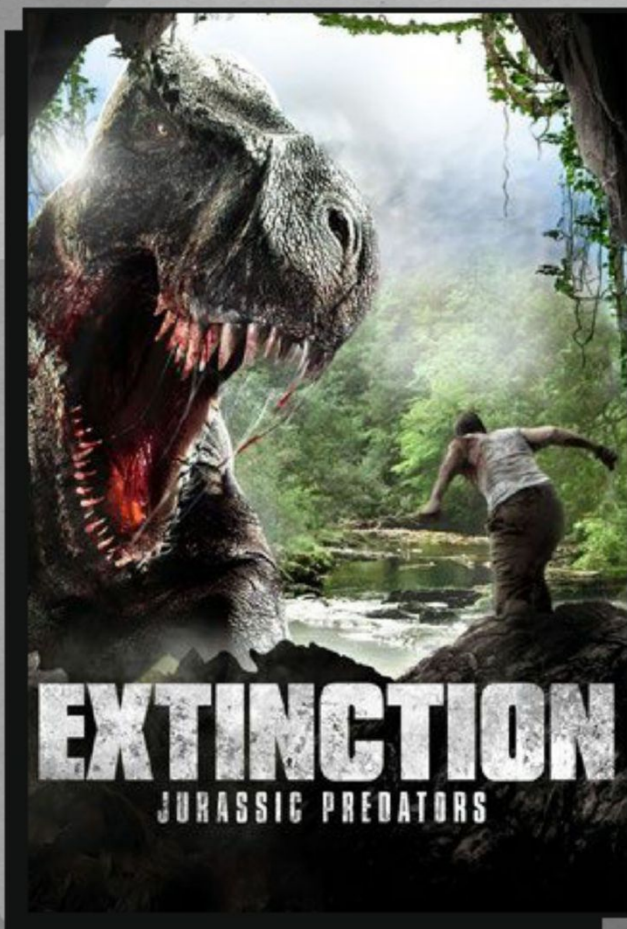
I think the pseudo-documentary elements give the story the immediacy I was looking for. I wanted *Survivors* to feel as though it was actually happening as the audience were watching; that it felt authentic in the moment. The other portion of the story was shot traditionally, giving a contrast between our narrative styles in the two timelines.

In regards to the approach to *Survivors*, did the budgetary requirements influence the techniques used?

The film was shot on a mixture of the Canon 5D Mark II and the Sony Z1; each camera was used for a different part of the storytelling as we have two different timelines in the film. We shot the film with a skeleton crew in a relatively short eighteen days, including pick-ups, so in that way I suppose we were limited but in terms of our story, there's nothing that we wrote that we didn't shoot.

Were there any particular struggles that came up while you were making the film?

When you make a film on this kind of budget, there are going to be



EXTINCTION: JURASSIC PREDATORS

countless obstacles in your way throughout the process. My main challenge was to try to make the film 'feel' bigger than it really was; to make the world *feel* believably dangerous.

I think that's something Gareth Edwards accomplished brilliantly with *Monsters*, in his cinematography and also in the score and use of VFX. It's that kind of spirit we brought to *Survivors* and I hope people can really see that... and there are also some surprises in there people might not be expecting from this kind of movie!

***Survivors* is your second film released**

within a few short months (the other being *Extinction*); did the filmmaking process differ much between each film, since the other is more of a found footage monster movie? Is it true you made *Survivors* first?

It's true I had shot the majority of *Survivors* before *Extinction* even started the writing process. There were certain time pressures on *Extinction* to reach the market in the same year as *Jurassic World*, so everything on that project was truncated, right from script through to post-production.

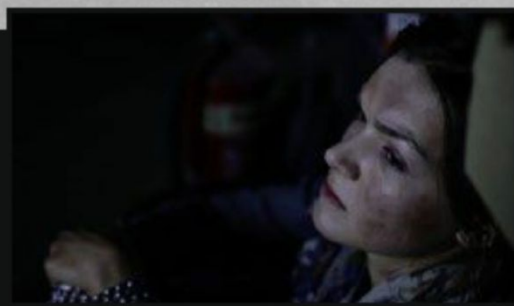
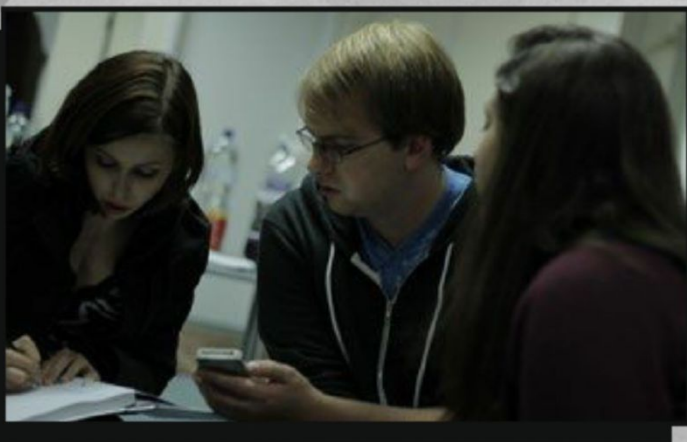
I think the difference between the

two films is time; with *Survivors* we really took our time and crafted every element - there wasn't anything I wasn't hands-on with or that didn't go through me, which means in the end, *Survivors* is a much more personal project. *Survivors* needed that time and the end result is all the better for it.

What was it like premiering *Extinction* at FrightFest?

FrightFest is amazing. The team they have working on it, the feel of the whole festival and the fantastic fans that go along - really, that screening

SURVIVORS



was probably one of my favourite experiences from making that film. They really welcome you in and they really foster an independent cinema experience there.

Was it hard to find distribution for the films?

In the traditional sense, I think it's getting harder to find distribution for any films, unless you're a big studio; but I think it comes down to making sure you have a high quality film with a strong story and production values. They say it all starts with the story and, from my experience with

distribution, that saying still goes strong. Certainly with *Survivors*, distributors have really responded to our narrative and to our characters.

If you were faced with an end of the world situation, which three people would you want to be around with you?

In all truthfulness, it's a difficult question to answer because you don't know where you'll be if it happens! The worst things seem to happen to people when they least expect it, so I'd imagine there wouldn't be too much choice in the matter.

I think Kate in *Survivors* was lucky

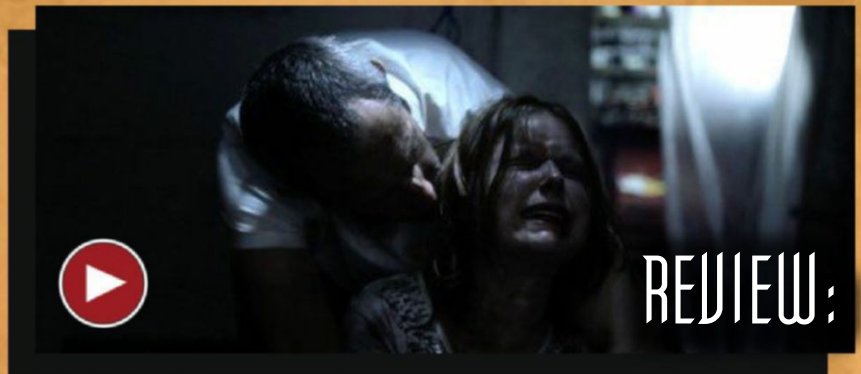
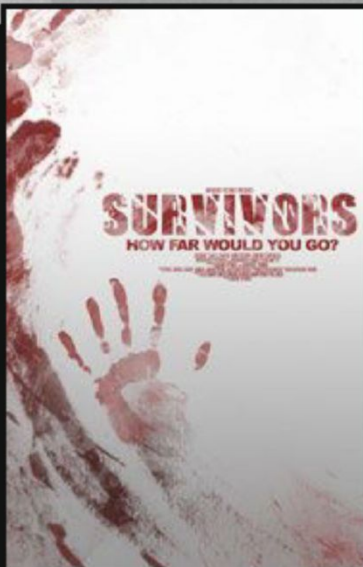
in some ways because her best friend, and probably her soul mate, was right by her side through it all. I guess we'd all wish for that.

Can you tell us anything about your next listed project, *Into the Grey*?

Into The Grey is kind of best described as *The Descent* meets *A Lonely Place To Die*, you know, happy-go-lucky kind of stuff! The script is written and we're starting to approach cast now, so watch this space!



SURVIVORS is out now on DVD and VOD.



SURVIVORS

SURVIVORS / CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR: ADAM J. SPINKS / SCREENPLAY: ADAM J. SPINKS, LAURENCE TIMMS / STARRING: JOANNE GALE, SIMON BURBAGE, DAVID ANDERSON, ADRIAN ANNIS, ALI CURREY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Audiences often write off low budget films without giving them a chance, either due to lack of famous names, or an assumption that the lack of money involved in the filmmaking process would equal a lesser end product. Adam Spinks' *Survivors* proves that all you need is a great script, an imaginative approach, and a spirited and enthusiastic cast.

We're often suspicious of big corporations, and the secrets they hold from the public. Here, an independent reporter, Kate (Gale), decides to mount an investigation into a weapons company conducting medical trials after hearing rumours of disturbing results. With her cameraman Duke (Burbage), she attempts to get close to the story of what's happening, but things very quickly take a turn for the apocalyptic when the test subjects become zombies.

As the situation escalates, Kate and Duke take shelter in a resident's home. However, the reanimated test patients have begun to swarm the surrounding area. The military has arrived, apparently to 'take control' (or perhaps cover up?), although Kate and Duke are dubious of their intentions. Reluctantly, the pair decides to split up. Choosing to face the 'rescue party', Duke allows Kate a chance to escape through the back. Kate goes on the run, unsure of Duke's fate, and hooks up with Paul (Anderson) who she meets in a field. Determined to make sure the truth gets out about what's happening, as well as find her cameraman, she discovers there's more to worry about than the infected flesh-eaters.

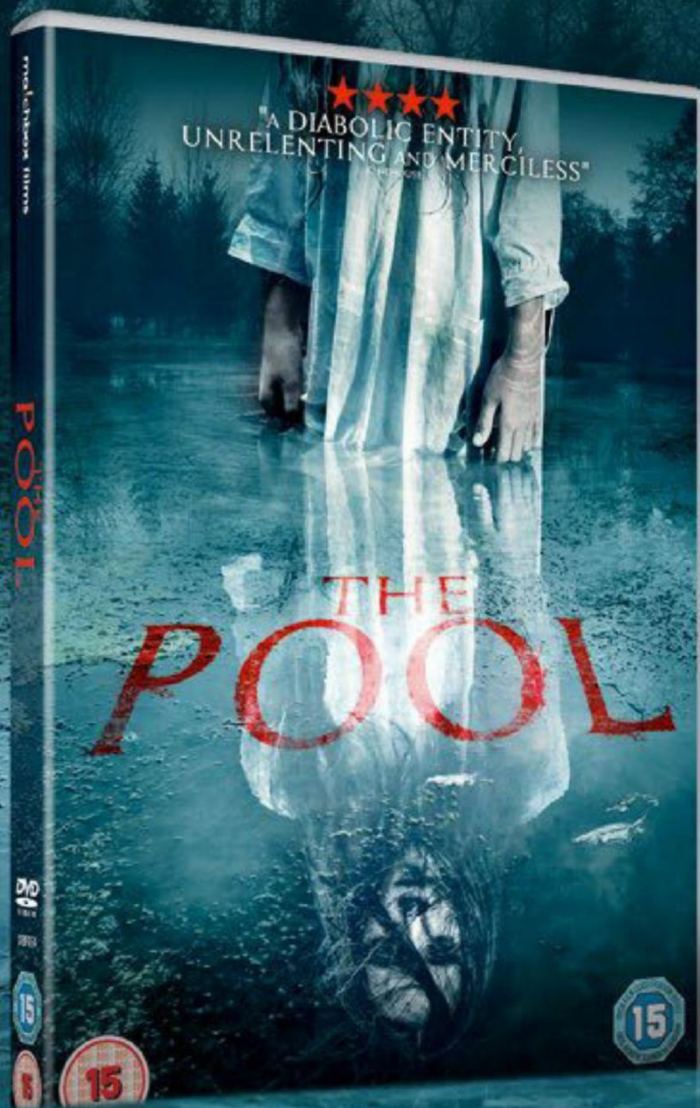
Although it may sound like a standard trope-filled shocker, it's refreshing to see that Spinks has managed to come up with a film that not only avoids the clichés but is a riveting and engaging human drama. It's presented, in part, as the couple shooting a documentary, consisting of the footage filmed by Duke, largely interspersed with the traditional filmmaking style. It's an approach that works perfectly, heightening tension and building the drama of the situation. We see the beginning of the investigation, but also the fact that things have apparently gone to shit. The two distinct styles make it easy for the viewer to distinguish where they are in the narrative's timeline, unlike some non-linear movies.

The acting is certainly well above the standard for the budget. As Kate, Joanne Gale is completely engaging; she is in almost every scene of the film and is essential for the audiences' sympathy and involvement - a position she holds perfectly. Simon Babbage's Duke - often unseen as he's behind the camera of the documentary footage - has quite a bit of 'comic relief' dialogue, particularly early on when he's in the uncomfortable position of filming the disturbing discoveries, but this isn't damaging as it is human nature. Being such a character-driven film, it could well put those wanting a typical gore-filled 'walking dead' film off, but it's immensely rewarding for those willing to give it a chance. The premise is also very relatable, with such corruption and unethical methods going on (or at least *thought* to be going on) in big business and, particularly, government-run facilities.

Survivors is a wonderfully nihilistic film that is both edge-of-the-seat tense and thoroughly captivating.



★★★★★
"DELIVERS A FIENDISHLY FRESH
'HORROR IN THE WOODS' DYNAMIC"
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HATERS GONNA H

QUENTIN
TARANTINO's
second Western
is about to make
its entrance.
STARBURST dusts
off our Stetson and
loads up the old
six-shooter as we
say howdy to THE
HATEFUL EIGHT...

by Kieron Moore

Hollywood's most controversial filmmaker is back. After his 2012 Western *Django Unchained* received an expected amount of praise and criticism for its lurid, violent exploration of racism and slavery, Quentin Tarantino is returning to the Old West for his new film – *The Hateful Eight* (sometimes stylised as *The Hateful 8*, or *The H8ful Eight*, but never *The H8ful 8*).

ONCE UPON A TIME IN THE WEST...

But this is a very different kind of Western to the action/revenge movie that *Django* was, nor is it much like the classic *Magnificent Seven* evoked by the title. Set 'six or eight or twelve' years after the end of the American Civil War, *The Hateful Eight* begins with bounty hunter John Ruth escorting his prisoner Daisy Domergue to the town of Red Rock to be hanged. On the road, he encounters fellow bounty hunter Marquis Warren and Sheriff Chris Mannix – also headed to Red Rock. But when a blizzard makes the road impassable, the four have to take shelter at Minnie's

Haberdashery, where they happen upon four more strangers. With the eight of them stranded together, each as full of hate (and as hateful) as



the other, tensions run high, and they may not all make it to Red Rock...

The constricted nature of this setup sounds a lot like a western version of *Reservoir Dogs*, the low budget crime movie that launched Tarantino's career. The director, however, claims the major influences on the story were '60s TV series like *Bonanza*, *High Chaparral*, and *The Virginian*.

These series regularly had stories where a gang of outlaws would take the main characters hostage; over the course of the episode, the outlaws' backstories would be revealed. Tarantino's aim was to do a movie version of these episodes, albeit cutting out the kidnapped heroes and replacing them with yet more 'hateful' outlaws.



ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

As befits a Tarantino movie, *The Hateful Eight* has been raising headlines right from the start. In January 2014, barely two months after the writer/director had announced he was working on another Western, the first draft of his script leaked onto the Internet. Tarantino threw a bit of a strop about this; he decided it wasn't worth making the film if everyone had read the script anyway and attempted to sue gossip blog Gawker for linking to it.

Thankfully, things got back on track not too long after. In April that year, Tarantino directed a live reading of the script in Los Angeles, featuring many of the same actors who'd go on to star in the film, albeit with Amber Tamblyn in the role later taken by Jennifer Jason Leigh. This seemed to motivate Tarantino to make the movie after all; *The Hateful Eight* was put before cameras last winter, shooting in Colorado. And with a different script, too – so if you were naughty and clicked on that Gawker link, there are still some surprises in store for you!

BIG BONANZA

One of the features of *The Hateful Eight* Tarantino has been most enthused about has been the fact that he and cinematographer Robert Richardson have shot it on 70mm film stock (as opposed to the usual 35mm, or, dare we mention it, digital), in an ultra-wide 2.76:1 ratio (as was used for classic Hollywood epics like *Ben-Hur* and *West Side Story*). In fact, as well as being shot on 70mm, Tarantino's made an effort to have it screened from

70mm film projectors, with 96 cinemas across the US and four in Canada opening the film early and screening them with this almost-obsolete technology. No film has been screened with a hundred 70mm prints since 1992's *Far and Away*, and it took the Weinstein Company a year and a half to even find all these projectors and outfit cinemas with them. He does take his film stock seriously, does Quentin. A select few cinemas here in the UK will be screening *The Hateful Eight* in 70mm; given the epic visual flourish with which it looks to be shot, you wouldn't go wrong to splash out a bit of extra cash and see it on the biggest screen you can – even if all the technical talk in this paragraph flew over your head like a bullet in a drunken saloon fight.

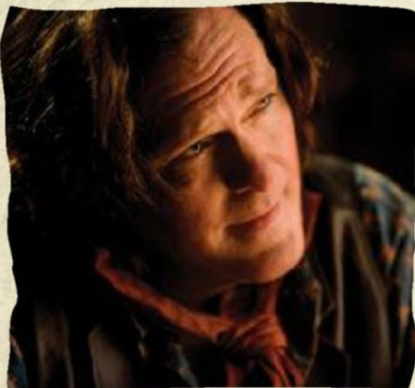
As well as cinematography, Tarantino's really into his music, and, in a move which will be a delight for all western fans, the entire score for *The Hateful Eight* has been composed by the legendary Ennio Morricone – his first score for a Western in over 40 years. Morricone previously worked with Tarantino on *Inglourious Basterds*, but refused to collaborate with the director again, saying he "places music in his films without coherence" and refusing to compose the score for *Django Unchained* – instead, Tarantino used one previously-written Morricone track on that film. Nevertheless, the Italian composer seems to have had a change of heart, and it should be great to hear his new score alongside Tarantino's story and Richardson's cinematography – coherent or not!



A TRUE HIT?

Add this spat with Morricone to the kerfuffle about the leaked script, and the fact that several police unions in the US have decided to boycott the film (because Tarantino dared suggest that cops shooting people may not be a great thing), and *The Hateful Eight* is already a film clouded in controversies, even before it's come out. But we'd expect no less from Mr. Tarantino. Cut through all of this, and we have a very interesting, ambitious piece of cinema on our hands. With a great concept combined with a Tarantino script, some popular cult actors, and a Morricone score, you can be sure it'll be worth visiting Minnie's Haberdashery this winter and finding out what all the fuss is about.

THE HATEFUL EIGHT will be holed up in UK cinemas from January 8th.



FIGURES OF HATE

As the title suggests, the film revolves around eight of the dodgiest characters in the Old West. Which of these, if any, do you think you can trust?

THE BOUNTY HUNTER

Samuel L. Jackson is Major Marquis Warren. He fought for the Union in the Civil War and has since become an infamous bounty hunter. Jackson is one of Tarantino's most frequent collaborators, having starred in five of his previous films, from *Pulp Fiction* to *Django Unchained*.



THE MEXICAN

Demián Bichir is Bob. He's the caretaker of Minnie's Haberdashery, and not too pleased that the other seven have shown up. There's something suspicious about him. Bichir has recently been seen in films *Machete Kills* and *Dom Hemingway*, as well as Mexican border-set crime series *The Bridge*.



THE HANGMAN

Kurt Russell is John Ruth. A brutish bounty hunter who never kills his bounties, but always brings them back to hang for their crimes. Most known for starring in John Carpenter's '80s actioners such as *The Thing* and *Escape From New York*, Russell has collaborated with Tarantino before in 2007's *Death Proof*.



THE LITTLE MAN

Tim Roth is Oswaldo Mobray. He's knowledgeable about the law and doesn't get on with Ruth. Returning to Tarantino's filmography after appearing over twenty years ago in *Reservoir Dogs* and *Pulp Fiction*, let's hope this is a step up from Roth's most recent starring role, as Sepp Blatter in the unspeakably awful *United Passions*.



THE PRISONER

Jennifer Jason Leigh is Daisy Domergue. When the story begins, this criminal is a captive of Ruth, being taken to her fate – but it's unlikely things will stay that way for long. This is one of Leigh's most high profile roles to date, having previously appeared in films such as *The Machinist*, *Road to Perdition*, and *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*.



THE COW PUNCHER

Michael Madsen is Joe Gage. For those of you not clued up on your historical agriculture, 'cow puncher' is another term for cowboy, or a hired hand who tends cattle, and not to be taken literally. Though in a Tarantino film, we can never be sure. Madsen's another Tarantino alumnus, having starred in *Reservoir Dogs* and both parts of *Kill Bill*.



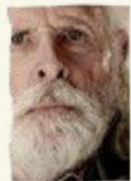
THE SHERIFF

Walton Goggins is Chris Mannix, who's on his way to Red Rock to be the town's new Sheriff. Throwing a lawman in the mix with all these criminals is obviously going to raise the tensions. Goggins had a small role in *Django Unchained* but is most recognisable from US TV series *The Shield* and *Justified*.



THE CONFEDERATE

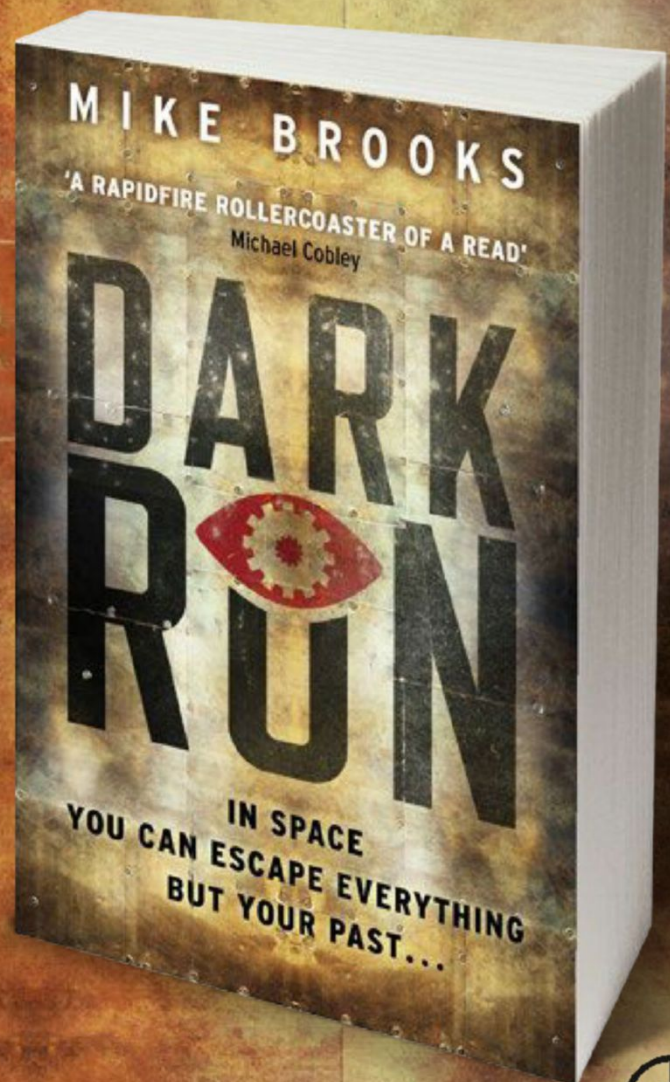
Bruce Dern is General Sanford Smithers. A racist, crotchety old man, who will undoubtedly come into conflict with the confederate-killing Warren. Dern had a small role in *Django Unchained* but is most known for appearing in '70s flicks like *Silent Running* and *The Great Gatsby*.





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The STARBURST MOVIES *of the* YEAR

One of the biggest years for genre films has come to an end, and as is customary, all the writers at STARBURST's HQ, Moonbase Alpha, have huddled together and squabbled over which films we liked the best. It wasn't pretty, we can tell you. It made *Wrestlemania* look like a picnic. We did come up with a definitive list of what we consider the best films of the year. Are your favourites there?

40. LEGEND



One Tom Hardy isn't enough for some people, as this retelling of the Kray Twins story proved. The ubiquitous man of the moment excelled in the dual role, most notably as psychotic Ronnie, but there were complaints that it didn't go far enough to show the true nasty side of the East End gangsters. That didn't stop it doing well at the box office, and it certainly kept the Hardy fans happy... MU

39. TOMORROWLAND



Brad Bird's eco-lecture lacks subtlety in its desperation to get its point across, but if you can ignore the blunt, if valid, message, this film is a visual feast. Colourful and engaging, *Tomorrowland* presents a rich futuristic rainforest full of shiny splendour, with your eyes constantly being pulled towards something new, but the spectacle only manages to cover over some of the flaws. That said, it's a good film to watch on a rainy afternoon with the family. And everyone loves George Clooney, don't they? JT

38. THE LOBSTER

It doesn't come much funnier and darker than Yorgos Lanthimos' cult classic in the making *The Lobster*. The basic premise is set in a near future when single people are not tolerated and sent off to a retreat away from all the 'normal people'. Here they have a short amount of time to attract a mate or they are turned into an animal of their choice and released into the nearby wilderness. They can also acquire more time there by hunting each other at night time. It's full of interesting subtexts, great visual gags, and above all is incredibly entertaining while remaining very clever. Essential. PP



37. MAGGIE

Arnold Schwarzenegger stars as Wade Vogel in this thoughtful, stately drama set in the aftermath of a zombie outbreak. His daughter Maggie has been infected and is doomed to turn into a cannibalistic killer, but Wade is determined to spend as much quality time with her as he can before the inevitable. Achingly poignant, Arnie delivers a surprisingly touching performance, but the film really belongs to Abigail Breslin as the tragic, quietly terrified Maggie. Pitifully ignored during its limited cinematic release, *Maggie* has 'future cult classic' written across every frame. PM



36. WHAT'S LEFT OF US



You could be forgiven for believing you'd seen everything a zombie apocalypse movie could offer but *What's Left of Us* from Christoph Behl will make you think again. Claustrophobic, chilling and at times unbearably tense, Behl's film brilliantly demonstrates the desperate futility of trying to exist in a ruined world as a bizarre love triangle understandably begin to turn on each other. More *Night of the Living Dead* than *Day of the Dead*, Behl's brilliantly bleak thriller will stay with you for some time. JT

35. THE HOBBIT: THE BATTLE OF THE FIVE ARMIES



The final part of Peter Jackson's *Hobbit* trilogy manages to sneak into this list by barely making the cut in terms of when it was released. With the dragon Smaug offed far too quickly here, the film quickly descends into a tense, action-filled affair as Thorin and his Dwarves defend the Lonely Mountain from various threats as it all kicks off. Sure, *The Hobbit* itself would've been better served as two movies, but *Battle* is a worthy closer for Jackson's latest trilogy. AP

34. SOME KIND OF HATE

Some Kind of Hate channels the spirit of *Carrie* to create an interesting film that explores bullying and isolation with a pit stop at lurid violence. Metal-head Lincoln is an introverted boy who is the victim of persistent abuse by his schoolmates, 'til one day he snaps back and is sent to the ominous 'Mind's Eye Academy' for his troubles. There he encounters the ghost of Moira who also suffered bullying and abuse. In the tale of revenge that follows, Moira begins to pick off the bullies in a unique and macabre fashion... FMB



33. THE FINAL GIRLS

An enjoyable, fun-poking effort from Todd Strauss-Schulson, **The Final Girls** is heart-warming, at times genuinely funny, and even a little scary as its story unravels. In its simplest terms, Taissa Farmiga's Max and her friends end up absorbed into the world of a slasher film; a film that just so happens to star Max's deceased mother as an emotional rollercoaster begins. **The Final Girls** is one of the lesser-known bright sparks of 2015 and one that deserves to be hunted down. AP



32. MINIONS

Love them or hate them, the little yellow fellows have been everywhere in 2015. The **Minions** movie saw the slapstick creatures carry a movie on their own. This should have come as no surprise to anyone - after all, they are Minions, and they carry stuff all the time. The film didn't suffer terribly from the lack of Gru, the main star of *Despicable Me* (where the minions made their debut). Sadly, marketing for this feature was a little zealous - you can get anything with a Minion on it these days and the inevitable backlash has begun! EF



31. TURBO KID



In terms of low-budget, cult movies of 2015, **Turbo Kid** is likely the best of the bunch. Featuring plenty of retro action, Anouk Whissell's tale proved to be a roaring success with anyone who got the chance to check it out. Set in a nuclear-ravaged world, our BMX-riding hero has to nut up and channel his comic book alter ego to help rescue his bestest pal from the evil hands of Zeus and his goons. Retro fun for all the family and undeniably as cult and cool as they come, **Turbo Kid** was one of 2015's little engines that could. AP

30. SHAUN THE SHEEP



This year Aardman continued to prove that they are the masters of the British childhood with **Shaun the Sheep**. This utterly charming movie takes Shaun and his farm animal pals out of the city to find the Farmer, who has gone AWOL. No mean feat given that the main cast speak no human language. The result is something adorable, memorable and very, very clever. Aardman continue to prove they are a truly world class outfit. EF

29. AMERICAN ULTRA



Bringing together a stellar cast that included Jesse Eisenberg, Topher Grace, Kristin Stewart, Walton Goggins and John Leguizamo, action-comedy **American Ultra** is a massively enjoyable movie that was a 2015 favourite of many. Eisenberg plays a stoner who finds out that he's a CIA-trained government agent and is now on the hit list of the government. Coming to terms with his new skills, this herb-puffer soon realises that he's just too good to take down. AP

28. THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE 3 (FINAL SEQUENCE)

It may be derided in some circles, but Tom Six's twisted series certainly has been entertaining. The final instalment went all out to shock, but was actually an acute satire on the American penal system, and surprised many by not being as OTT gory as the previous film. Dieter Laser steals the show as the tyrannical Bill Boss, but Laurence R. Harvey is equally superb as his suffering clerk Dwight Butler - despite the suspect accent! MU



27. MR. HOLMES

Sir Ian McKellen thrives here as the titular Sherlock, playing a long-retired, dementia-suffering version of the famed detective. Bothered by a 30-year-old unsolved case, McKellen puts in one of the performances of the year as his Holmes desperately tries to piece together the clues of yesteryear while battling father time and his own fading memories. In terms of 2015's releases, McKellen's turn here is of the very highest quality and arguably the best of the year. AP



26. BIG HERO 6

Since *Tangled*, Disney has been churning out classic after classic, and **Big Hero 6** is no exception. What makes it so charming is that, despite being an *Incredibles*-influenced superhero story, its real charm lies in its sense of excitement and warmth. Tackling themes of loss and acceptance in a way all ages can accept, it delivers big time with its constant display of fun and humour. Most of which is thanks to Baymax, who has now become a Disney icon and deservedly so. Oh, and that Stan Lee cameo was priceless! BP



25. THE FALLING



From writer-director Carol Morley came this sort-of-horror/sort-of-drama, following a mysterious fainting outbreak at an all-girls school. It's more arty fare than many of the entries on this list, and the slow pacing may not be to everyone's taste, but to its fans, it's a magnificent and distinctive film, which left us thinking long after we'd left the cinema. **Game of Thrones'** Maisie Williams gave an incredible performance, cementing her place as one of the best young upcoming actors of the moment. KM

24. THE HALLOW



English couple Adam and Claire relocate to the Irish countryside, where the warnings from locals about malevolent woodland faeries prove to be far more than mere superstition. With the whirl of a flaming scythe, the début feature from director Corin Hardy crafts a story of suspense and menace largely eschewing CGI for practical effects. Part body-horror, home invasion flick, monster movie, and man vs. nature tale, its wonderfully old-school atmosphere anoints it worthy of sitting alongside the classics that inspired it. AM

23. TERMINATOR GENISYS



Massively flawed yet somehow not quite as bad as the buzz would have you believe, **Terminator Genisys** certainly had its moments as it attempted to progress the **Terminator** franchise whilst also changing up the past and giving us alternative takes on what we've seen before. Some of it worked, some of it fell flat, and the whole movie wasn't helped by revealing its major twist in nearly all of its trailers and TV spots. Still, it wasn't **Terminator Salvation**, at least. AP

22. THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PART ONE

Political manoeuvring was always going to be a difficult sell in young adult, dystopian future fiction but the third film in **The Hunger Games** series does a better job than you might expect. Largely replacing the arena with the boardroom, Francis Lawrence brings in more Hollywood heavyweights such as Julianne Moore and manages to make a propaganda-fuelled story interesting. The chances are if you haven't already seen it you won't, but as the first part of the final chapter in one of the biggest franchises in cinema it's pretty hard to ignore. JT



21. SPY

Coming with virtually no expectations, Paul Feig's hilarious spy parody was a sweary, action-packed hoot. Melissa McCarthy excelled in the lead, embracing her badass femininity. Supporting stars Miranda Hart, Peter Serafinowicz, Jude Law, and a scene-stealing self-deprecating Jason Statham were all on tip top form too. **Spy** sets up a possible comedy series and on the evidence of this film, we would love to see the woman with the golden tongue back on the big screen! JB



20. THE MAN FROM U.N.C.L.E.

In 2015, the suave, stylish, spy-caper made a glorious return not in James Bond's latest adventure **SPECTRE**, but rather in Guy Ritchie's reboot of the '60s TV spy adventure. Apart from minor missteps, like reimagining Illya Kuryakin as a Russian rage monster, **U.N.C.L.E.** looks and sounds like it was ripped straight from the '60s; incredibly stylish, funny, with well executed action scenes and a delicious soundtrack. It deserved a bigger reception than it received. IM



19. WHITE GOD



Billed as **Rise of the Planet of the Apes** meets **Homeward Bound** meets **Cujo**, **White God** is a remarkable tale. Breaking records for its vast canine cast (all of whom were given good homes after the film's completion), this original and breath-taking film was a painstaking work of beauty and brutality that had commendable intentions and a powerful ideology. Director Kornél Mundruczó's parable of social class issues and animal cruelty in the modern world is a haunting, fierce and emotional cinematic journey that ends with real bite. JB

18. PREDESTINATION



Like time-travel greats **Primer** and **Timecrimes**, **Predestination** is a delicately crafted ouroboros of a tale, whose constituent parts fit together so well you couldn't even fit a tachyon between them. Ethan Hawke inducts Sarah Snook into a time agency, chasing through time after a mad bomber, but not all is what it seems. The film simultaneously manages to resolve everything in a neat bow and leave room for ambiguity in its ending, with fantastic performances all round. IM

17. WE ARE STILL HERE



This low-budget horror from writer/director Ted Geoghegan received masses of critical and audience appraisal for its atmospheric tension and its homage to the '80s style. **We Are Still Here** is a fresh take on the haunted house angle. A middle aged-couple, Paul and Anne, move to a rustic house hoping the change of scenery will help ease the mourning for their son. Things take a turn for the supernatural when Paul is convinced he can feel the presence of their departed son. The film starts with a nuanced subtlety, but as new characters join the fray the pace builds to boiling point. FMB

16. FAST & FURIOUS 7

Whether you know it as **Fast & Furious 7**, **Furious 7**, **Fast 7** or simply **Boy Racers Drive Moderately Fast 7**, James Wan's high-actioner was a huge box office success, taking home a whopping \$1.5 billion, making it the fifth highest-grossing film of all-time, the second highest-grossing film of 2015 (behind **Jurassic World**), and the quickest film to reach \$1 billion on its release. More of the same was the order of the day here, with fast cars, hard action, Vin Diesel being Vin Diesel, Dwayne Johnson stealing the show, and also a poignant ending centred on the deceased Paul Walker. AP



15. CHAPPIE

Part **Short Circuit**, part troubled future crime effort, Neill Blomkamp's **CHAPPIE** may not have been quite as good as we were hoping, but it still certainly had its charms. In a future where police droids help fight the good fight, a single droid is stolen and given the chance to think for himself. Starring Blomkamp mainstay Sharlto Copley in the titular role, **CHAPPIE** could have been so much better, but it still deserves a place amongst our Top 40. AP



14. A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT

Ana Lily Amirpour's debut is a work of beauty; an exceptional and seamless amalgamation of genres and themes - horror, noir, silent cinema, and Gothicism are all wrapped up in a stunning monochrome aesthetic. Sheila Vand is also enchanting as the alluring and enigmatic spectre that lurks the streets of the fictional Iranian ghost town 'Bad City'. The tagline as the 'first Iranian Vampire Western film' is an understatement. **A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night** is so much more. FMB



13. CRIMSON PEAK



Young author Edith Cushing is swiftly romanced by charming nobleman Thomas Sharpe and is soon whisked off to live with Sharpe and his aloof sister Lucille at the titular family home. Beset by warnings from ghostly apparitions, Edith comes to realise that the crumbling manor hides many secrets, both paranormal and all too human. Guillermo del Toro returns to the gothic supernatural tales that have always been his greatest strength, creating a ghost story as lavish as it is sinister. AM

12. MISSION IMPOSSIBLE: ROGUE NATION



After the success of **Ghost Protocol**, the espionage series, like its leading star, gets better with age. **Rogue Nation** embraces fun while not forgetting about providing an entertaining plot with ridiculously enjoyable set pieces (that IMAX friendly opening) and a non-stop pace. Tom Cruise could, at this rate, keep on making these movies forever and if they are all as good as this, we have no problem with that. **Rogue Nation** is fun from start to finish. JB

11. INSIDE OUT



Pixar released two films in 2015, and one of them was arguably among their finest works, **Inside Out**. The film took us inside a young girl's head and in the process made us all look into our own feelings, experiences and thoughts. Pixar's intelligent, inventive and breathtakingly animated film stands as one of the studio's most accomplished works. The characters were a joy (no pun intended) and the concept was ingenious, creating that rarest of movie that any viewer - of any age, race, or belief - can connect with and relate to in some way. JB

10. SPECTRE

Following the huge success of **Skyfall**, director Sam Mendes reunited with Daniel Craig for a film which attempted to tie up the narratives of all four of Craig's movies. Purists may balk at some of the liberties taken with Bond's own personal history and the series' previously established (if hopelessly convoluted) lore but **Spectre** managed to pack in plenty of lively set pieces alongside Craig's most relaxed performance in a film which danced with the clichés of the classic Bond yarns whilst never fully embracing them. Where next for 007? PM



9. IT FOLLOWS

It Follows is a film that harks back to the glory days of American suburban horror, whilst injecting a dose of the contemporary in the form of a subtext on the dangers of promiscuity and an ominous, enveloping synth-laden soundtrack. Along with the score, the cinematography is one of the aspects that pushes **It Follows** into the arthouse realm. The brooding, almost sterile camerawork makes tremendous use of zoom and steady tracking shots to create an eerie sensation of inhuman voyeurism. Whether it is a film about STDs or the fragility in teenage existentialism, **It Follows** achieves a horror film's primary objective... it is unsettling. FMB



8. JURASSIC WORLD

Fourteen years after **Jurassic Park 3**, Colin Trevorrow's triumphant return to the Isla Nublar setting of Spielberg's iconic 1993 classic, now a fully-functioning (but not for long) theme park attraction, roundly proved that movie audiences are far from done with dinosaurs. Fast and furious, if light on character, **Jurassic World**, starring Hollywood's new go-to macho tough guy Chris Pratt, broke box office records and quickly became the second most successful title in the franchise's history. Movie number five hits in June 2018. PM



7. AVENGERS: AGE OF ULTRON



This sequel had a lot to live up to – Joss Whedon's first take on Earth's Mightiest Heroes was loved by fans, critics and audiences alike and topped our poll in 2012. **Age of Ultron** didn't entirely live up to its predecessor – the jokes didn't have the same hit rate, and some characters got short-changed – but it maintained the same sense of adventure, action and fun, while giving us a darker and more thematically rich story. KM

6. BIRDMAN (OR THE UNEXPECTED VIRTUE OF IGNORANCE)



Despite landing on the first day of 2015 (here in the UK), **Birdman** sits on the perch of the best movies of this year or any other. Taking us inside the mind of a troubled actor, **Birdman** looks at what separates high art from soulless trash and who really makes that distinction. This film is challenging, beautifully made and features a phoenix from the ashes, career-best performance by the ever-underrated Michael Keaton. Director Alejandro González Iñárritu crafts a landmark picture about the nature of opinion and the discovery of our own self-worth and also one that just happens to hilariously satirise the world of stage acting, cinema and pop culture.

Birdman is a masterpiece. JB

5. KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE



Matthew Vaughn arguably did Bond better than Bond this year, with a firecracker of a spy pastiche in **Kingsman**. Adapted from the lesser-known Dave Gibbons and Mark Millar comic, this film blended action and comedy beautifully in a spy caper reminiscent of foul-mouthed Moore era Bond with Brosnan era gadgetry and techno visuals. **Kingsman** boasts a brilliant script, excellent performances (especially from Colin Firth) and some absolutely barmy set pieces. Why so serious, Bond? JB

4. THE MARTIAN

Ridley Scott's much-anticipated adaptation of Andy Weir's phenomenally popular novel was a triumphant return to form for the veteran director thanks to Drew Goddard's smart, snappy script and a typically likeable performance from Matt Damon as botanist Mark Watney, battling to stay alive after being stranded on Mars. Warm, witty, exciting and spectacular, **The Martian** finally broke the box office 'curse of the Red Planet' by raking in over \$560 million worldwide to date. Go Mars! PM



3. ANT-MAN

Thief Scott Lang is recruited by reclusive scientific genius Hank Pym to become the Ant-Man. Using a special suit enabling him to shrink to the size of an insect and gain a proportional increase in strength, Lang must steal the Yellowjacket, a weaponised version of the Ant-Man suit created by Pym's former protégé. More a heist movie than a superhero one, Ant-Man nevertheless continues the cinematic juggernaut that is Marvel's Cinematic Universe with a dose of excitement, suspense and fun. AM



2. EX_MACHINA

The idea of artificial intelligence struggling to attain humanity is as old as sci-fi itself yet, **Ex_Machina**, directed by Alex Garland from his own script, is a wonderfully stylish and evocative movie powered by outstanding performances from Domhnall Gleeson, Oscar Isaac and Alicia Vikander as the sophisticated, self-aware humanoid robot Ava. More of an arthouse hit than a sci-fi blockbuster, **Ex_Machina** remains a hauntingly clinical experience and, like the very best sci-fi, a cautionary tale.

PM



1. MAD MAX: FURY ROAD



Taking the action genre to spectacular peaks and heights, **Mad Max: Fury Road** is the biggest film in the series to date, not just with its vast locales, but also in its scale, scope and wide variety of iconic characters. Tom Hardy lives up to the legacy of Mad Max that was laid down by Mel Gibson before him, yet it's Charlize Theron that steals the film from under everyone's noses as the empowering Imperator Furiosa. A symphonic ballet of pedal-to-the-metal carnage and destruction, this latest offering from George Miller demonstrates that a 30-year-old franchise can never get stale. RP

In Issue 410, I commented in **It's Only A Movie** that 2015 had got off to a fantastic start with a slew of great genre movies, none of which could really be seen as a disappointment. As the year continued, I was waiting for the other shoe to drop but (other than the catastrophic misjudgement that was **Fantastic Four**) 2015 has been, in my opinion, the best year for genre cinema this century (It's only been 15 years, so calm down, and put your list of classics away!).

It's much harder to pinpoint any trends, or patterns this time around. Unlike the previous year, which was a good one for the low budget genre flick, 2015 instead presented us with a mixed bag of low budget, humongous budget, sequels, remakes, and one or two oddities. The best news (from my perspective) is that this is the final year that the chart will feature one of those dreadful Hobbit movies. **The Hobbit: The Battle of the Five Armies**, despite being awful managed to limp in at number 35, tragically beating the excellent comedy **The Lobster** by three places. One last injustice from the worst screen trilogy ever made.

Sequels don't do as well as reimagining/remakes this time around. **Terminator: Genisys** only makes it to number 23, whilst Katniss & co. make it one place further with **The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part One** bagging number 22. Even the incredible mainstream zeitgeist riding **Fast & Furious 7** only gets to 16, with **Mission Impossible: Rogue Nation** and **SPECTRE** at numbers 12 and 10 respectively. There is indeed a sense of some *sequel fatigue* as evidenced by the box office juggernaut that was **Jurassic World** only reaching number 8 in our chart. Perhaps the sequels are simply getting downgraded due to the aforementioned glut of quality new properties? This could well be in evidence by the fact that **Kingsman: The Secret Service** beats Bond by five places, riding high in the chart at number 5.

Marvel Studios were in attendance as usual. Although there is again the dominance of the new over the established. **Avengers: Age of Ultron** still manages to attain number 7, but it is newcomer **Ant-Man** that rules the Marvel roost at number 3. Not bad for a movie that many critics had already written off as Marvel's first dud. I have to break with convention and admit that **Ant-Man** was number 1 on my list of 2015 movies. It was just so much damn fun! This dominance by new properties is even more apparent within the Top 5 movies with **The Martian** and **Ex Machina** proving that 2015 was a very good year for original sci-fi properties. Both cleaning up at the box office whilst also reaping a raft of positivity from the critics. Then right at the very top of the tree, securing our number one spot is **Mad Max: Fury Road**. From the moment we first saw the trailers it was apparent that George Miller might not be wasting his time with this project. Indeed, **Mad Max** was back in a blisteringly-paced fantasy action thrill fest that seemed to win everyone over. Whilst technically a sequel, it feels more like a reboot, but who cares, it's a modern classic.

As we go to print we are days away from the release of a movie that might just scrape into next year's chart. The force might well be with 2016, but man, what a tough year to follow.

JORDAN ROYCE

Words by Andrew Pollard, Paul Mount, Jack Bottomley, Andrew Marshall, Hieron Moore, Ed Fortune, Ford Maddox Brown, Ryan Pollard, Phil Perry, Iain McNally, and Martin Unsworth.

REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG
SCREEN GENRE
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



VICTOR FRANKENSTEIN

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: PAUL MCGUIGAN / SCREENPLAY: MAX LANDIS / STARRING: DANIEL RADCLIFFE, JAMES MCAVOY, JESSICA BROWN FINDLAY, ANDREW SCOTT / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The latest take on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* applies a slightly different tack from its cinematic forebears and focuses not on the monster or the act of its creation, but rather on the "bromance" between the good doctor and his assistant, Igor. Rescuing the initially nameless, uneducated and abused hunchback from a cruel circus, where he was acting as both clown and physician (WHAT?!), Victor soon resolves most of Igor's medical problems, gives him a new home and sets him up as his assistant.

Igor gets to work helping Victor with relatively small scale experiments reviving dead tissue, experiments that are then whipped away to a mysterious laboratory in the basement, while on his off time he checks in on the lovely trapeze artist from the circus (Jessica Brown Findlay) and is in turn pursued by an overzealous Detective Inspector (Andrew Scott) who has unnatural suspicions about Victor's recent activities.

While the tone of the film varies wildly, it sets a baseline when the title character first introduces his name via a cutaway to the film's title card, a moment that comes off a little too knowingly cute.

Like the monster, Victor Frankenstein is an odd patchwork of cinematic parts, flirting with action, adventure, romance and comedy during its runtime. Most of the comedy seems intentional and primarily comes from McAvoy's manic performance as Frankenstein, frequently engaging in hyperactive rants, spittle flying from his mouth in a most entertaining fashion. McAvoy clearly had a whale of a time making this and as a result is the most enjoyable thing about the film. As Igor, Radcliffe has to act as audience surrogate and as such spends most of the time catching up on what's going on, a role that seems a little too familiar given his recent projects. Scott, meanwhile needs to get a better agent, as after *Spectre*

and this he's rapidly getting typecast as a sneering villain. Director Paul McGuigan (*Push*, *Lucky Number Slevin*) orchestrates all of this in a style that feels a little like Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*, albeit one where anatomical drawings replace the frequent slow-mo fetish of that series.

The monster only make a cursory appearance at the film's climax and hints are given that this might not be "THE" monster but rather "A" monster, presumably in order to leave the door open for the sequels hoped for by the studio. Based upon what's on offer here though, it's doubtful audiences will be raising flaming brands and pitchforks demanding the creation of any sequel.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED +++++ ++ 8

ACTUAL +++++ ++ 7

STARBURST



THE GOOD DINOSAUR

CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: PETER SOHN / SCREENPLAY: MEG LEFAUVE / STARRING: JEFFREY WRIGHT, FRANCES MCDORMAND, RAYMOND OCHOA, JACK BRIGHT, STEVE ZAHN, SAM ELLIOTT, ANNA PAQUIN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Despite a couple of hiccups, Pixar have for the most part released inventive, entertaining, enjoyable and above all touching films, however, with such a track record and the weight of expectation that brings, even the slightest of flaws in any new release tend to get magnified unfairly. In a year that also saw the release of the superlative *Inside Out*, *The Good Dinosaur* has a hard road ahead of it to impress as much as that movie did.

In a world where the asteroid that supposedly hit the Earth and wiped out the dinosaurs actually *missed*, Arlo the Apatosaurus also has a rough task ahead of him. On his family's farm, each member must 'make their mark', usually by knuckling down and overcoming some difficult task; but try as he might, Arlo just can't seem to find an area to excel in. He's too small to till the fields or take on clearance work like his brother and sister and the family's chicken-like birds that he's supposed to be in charge of terrorise him mercilessly. Most things, in fact, scare him senseless.

After a Bambi-like trauma, which younger children may find very upsetting, an encounter with a 'critter' who keeps raiding the family's food

stocks leads both Arlo and the critter to be swept downriver and far away from home, out of sight of even the huge clawtooth mountain that overlooks the farm. Arlo must now face up to his fear and find his way home, perhaps with some help from an unexpected source.

Working like a reverse *Finding Nemo*, *The Good Dinosaur* follows Arlo and his occasional companions on the journey home, providing a pretty sparse look at a world where the dinosaurs lived on for millions of years longer than they did in reality.

Needless to say, the 'critter' that Arlo runs into is, in fact, a small human cave boy and the majority of the film focuses on the growing relationship between the two, as they come to trust each other. They come across a number of different dinos along their way but the cast feels relatively small and while *Finding Nemo* had the banter between Marlin and Dory to keep adults entertained, Arlo's travelling companion doesn't talk, which, when coupled with Arlo's frequent habits of screaming and getting knocked out, does make the film feel as if it's aimed at younger viewers.

To make up for this, the film does provide some beautiful vistas, much of it looking almost real, but this does create

an odd tension with the design of Arlo and the other dinosaurs, as they are quite cartoony while the world around them is not.

While the story may be relatively slight, Pixar have not lost their penchant for emotionally devastating audiences, with a couple of moments of intense sadness, one of which is almost entirely wordless and a piece of bravura filmmaking that is as well done as anything Pixar have done before. Unfortunately, the rest of the film doesn't quite feel as if it can support these moments.

With *Inside Out* still so fresh in the mind, comparisons with that film are inevitable and a little unfavourable. *The Good Dinosaur* is a much simpler film, basically the story of a boy and his dog, only the boy is an Apatosaurus and the dog is a boy. While it's still very enjoyable, it doesn't *quite* live up to the standard expected of Pixar, even if those expectations are completely unfair and unreasonable. It's your own fault Pixar, for putting out so many good films in the past!

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★★★ 9

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★ 8

AUDIOSTATIC

THE LATEST NEWS
FROM THE WORLD OF
AUDIO ADVENTURES
BY TONY JONES



STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

Science fiction fans may have noticed a certain film has just been released. While all the attention has been on trailers, booking tickets, and the merchandising, audio fans have not been left out. There will be an audio version of **The Force Awakens** based on the Alan Dean Foster novelisation of the film. Whereas the book is available on January 1st, the audio version won't appear until later in the month (the 16th is the current date given). What this means is you can see the film a few times before listening to the audio version of the book or if you can't wait, you could read the book out loud yourself and make your own audio.

On a more serious note, **Star Wars** is no stranger to audio; in 1981, writer Brian Daley produced a script for a 13-part audio version of the original film, featuring some, but not all, of the original cast. It split fan opinion at the time, but the exercise was repeated for **The Empire Strikes Back** and **Return of the Jedi**. No word on a similar project for **The Force Awakens**, but at least the soundtrack has been released on various formats to coincide with the movie.

Big Finish Unveil Climax to First TORCHWOOD Series

Recently, Big Finish revealed details for the final episode in their first **Torchwood** series – **More Than This**. Set just after the recently released **Forgotten Lives**, this story is about Gwen Cooper (Eve Myles) deciding to get the Torchwood Hub rebuilt (it was destroyed by the Home Office – on the orders of Peter Capaldi's character no less!) and this can only mean one thing. The chance for a new series of **Torchwood** set after **Miracle Day**, and with some new characters!

Big Finish too hasn't forgotten Christmas and there is a two-episode **Dorian Gray** to look forward to, in which David Warner's Santa tries to assassinate Dorian (played by Alexander Vlahos) – see the box-out for more details.

STRANGENESS IN SPACE

It's also Christmas, in case you hadn't noticed (that period between the **Star Wars** movie release and the **Doctor Who** special). One group who haven't forgotten are **Strangeness in Space**, the free online sci-fi audio comedy featuring Sophie Aldred with Trevor Neal and Simon Hickson. Not only are two episodes now available, there is also a Christmas anthem available from the show's '80s house band Pink Custard. All the details on strangenessinspace.com.

BBC Announce 2016 Audio Drama Awards Shortlist

A great selection of genre titles have made it to the shortlist for the Audio Drama Awards 2016, which is held at BBC Broadcasting House on Sunday January 31st. Director Peter Strickland (**Berberian Sound Studio**, **The Duke of Burgundy**) is in the running for **The Len Continuum**, his first shot at a radio play, while the adaptations of **Fight Club** and **Ring** could be up for best use of

sound. The best online only category is made up mostly of Big Finish titles. The lucky finalists are announced on January 5th, and we will report on the winners in #422.

BIG FINISH WE LOVE STORIES

Key titles to watch out for this month from Big Finish...

DOCTOR WHO: THE EARLY ADVENTURES

2.04 - THE ISOS NETWORK

Another adventure from the Second Doctor's term. This story follows on from the TV serial *The Invasion* with the Cybermen (voiced by Nicholas Briggs) returning to cause more terror for The Doctor and his companions, Jamie (Frazer Hines) and Zoe (Wendy Padbury). This is the last of this current run of Early Adventures, and will leave listeners wanting more.

AVAILABLE DECEMBER 31st

+++

DOCTOR WHO: MAIN RANGE

#207 - YOU ARE THE DOCTOR AND OTHER STORIES

Four more new stories for the Seventh Doctor and his companion Ace. Sylvester McCoy and Sophie Aldred are joined by comedian Jon Culshaw in a collection that includes a story written by Jamie Anderson, the son of the legendary **Thunderbirds** creator.

AVAILABLE DECEMBER 31st

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THE CONFESSIONS OF DORIAN GRAY:

THE SPIRITS OF CHRISTMAS

A seasonal outing for Alexander Vlahos' portrayal of the Oscar Wilde character, with a pair of hour-long stories with a typically festive edge. A strong cast including Guy Adams, Sophie Aldred, Lisa Bowerman, Katy Manning, and David Warner promises to make this a perfect way to keep the good cheer going. There's also a bonus disc of additional material and interviews for those who order from the Big Finish website.

AVAILABLE DECEMBER 31st

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TORCHWOOD: 1.4 ONE RULE

It's March 26th, 2005, and head of Torchwood One, Yvonne Hartman (Tracy-Ann Oberman) visits Cardiff following the murder of the Mayor. An alien is on the loose hunting for blood and Hartman is determined to get her job done, despite local council in-fighting. It's the day that everything changes.

AVAILABLE DECEMBER 31st

+++

PATHFINDER LEGENDS

2.3 - MUMMY'S MASK: SHIFTING SANDS

Based on the popular roleplaying game, the exciting adventures set in the Garundi nation of Osirion continue. Valeros, Ezren, and Merisiel are under threat by a deadly cult while attempting to uncover the truth about the Forgotten Pharaoh.

AVAILABLE DECEMBER 31st

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THE MARTIAN CHRONICLES

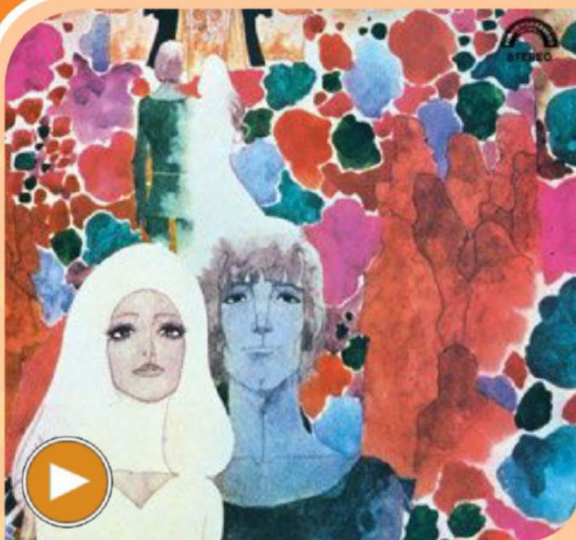
Ray Bradbury's classic story is given a stunning audio drama adaptation with an amazing cast including Sir Derek Jacobi, Agent Carter herself, Hayley Atwell and John Altman. Originally produced for BBC Radio 4, this is a timeless and essential listen.

AVAILABLE DECEMBER 31st

To order, or for more information, head over to bigfinish.com

THE LATEST AUDIO
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED

REVIEWS



BELLADONNA

COMPOSER: MASAHIKO SATO / LABEL: FINDERS KEEPERS /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Your reviewer has never seen the film *Belladonna of Sadness*, for which Masahiko Sato performed the score – and he's not particularly certain he'd be able to handle it. The press release for the *Belladonna* re-release from Finders Keepers definitely played up the

psychedelic aspect of the score, to the point where, listening to the opening cut – Andy Warhol – one wondered if they were overselling, as it's a pretty basic bit of pipe organ and swirling kettle drum. Beautiful and strange, yes, but not substantially psychedelic. Of course, then the last 50 seconds of the song kick into overdrive, and there's a certain sense of having been lulled into a false sense of security. The score backs off for a few cuts, with *Belladonna* and *Valle Incantata* operating in pretty standard blissed-out, organ-fueled dreamy '60s rock 'n' roll. Psych rock, but not full-on psychedelia.

The *Notice is Notice*, *Mr. London*, and then pretty much the entire second side of the record,

however, are freak outs in full effect. Music phases from side to side, and the stereo effect is used to great ends. By the time the record's been flipped over, it's readily apparent as to why this has been reissued, and why it's been fetching such massive sums on the secondary market

for the original pressing. Sato has created music that's both fascinating and absolutely involving.

Belladonna and *TBSF* are the only lyrical cuts, and it seems like that's just about the right number. Any more would've distracted from the absolutely fantastic instrumental work on display here. The guitar is held just barely in check, sounding as if it might at any moment see the collapse of the performer playing it. It's in stark counterpoint to the absolutely laconic drum work. The organ holds everything together.

Take *It Easy* closes everything out on a funky note. Despite adding in strange horns and further percussion, it also keeps the sounds of the earlier tracks while still managing to venture even further afield in terms of absolute musical adventure.

The reissue from Finders Keepers renders the music of *Belladonna* warm and rounded, creating an auditory experience that envelops the listener, allowing them to take in each and every aspect of this wonderfully weird, yet still accessible piece of cinema scoring. Fans of animation, psychedelia, and film scores – to say nothing of those looking for kicks to trip out on – will all find something to appreciate here.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



PRE-CERT

COMPOSER: VIDEOGRAM / LABEL: CINEPLOIT /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Videoqram's been operating in the faux-soundtrack/homage game for a few years now, and it's always impressive to see how the Swedish composer can tweak familiar compositions to create

something fresh and new. The musician – also known as Magnus Sellergen – has made some wonderfully fun digital singles in recent years, but this marks his first full-length release.

These pieces are all, quite literally, takes on popular themes from pre-cert video scores. The titles let you know what you're into right away, and that's really half the fun of this record: seeing how well *Videoqram* takes on a variety of styles. One wouldn't think the Jerry Goldsmith-inspired *Damien* would pair up all that well with a take on Sylvester Levay's *Cobra* score, but the eerie Gothic feel of *The Omen* eases surprisingly well into the action funk of *Cobretti*.

There's also not one, but two versions of the Harry Manfredini disco funk of *Friday the 13th Part III*; *Camp Blood* is more ponderously creepy, working the beats a little slower, and in a lower register; *Voorhees Stomp* is a trifle more upbeat, with a higher keyboard line that contrasts with the low-end pulse of the backbeat allowing this to operate as more of a dancer-number, replete with handclaps.

The fact that all the pieces are synth and drum-based lends them similarities they'd not have otherwise. Other than the fact that these are all genre-influenced pieces, there's not a lot in common between the music of *Phantasm* or *Mangiati Vivi*. However, Sellergen manages to tie all of these disparate influences together into a fantastic compilation that plays like a best-of, while still feeling as if it's brand-new.

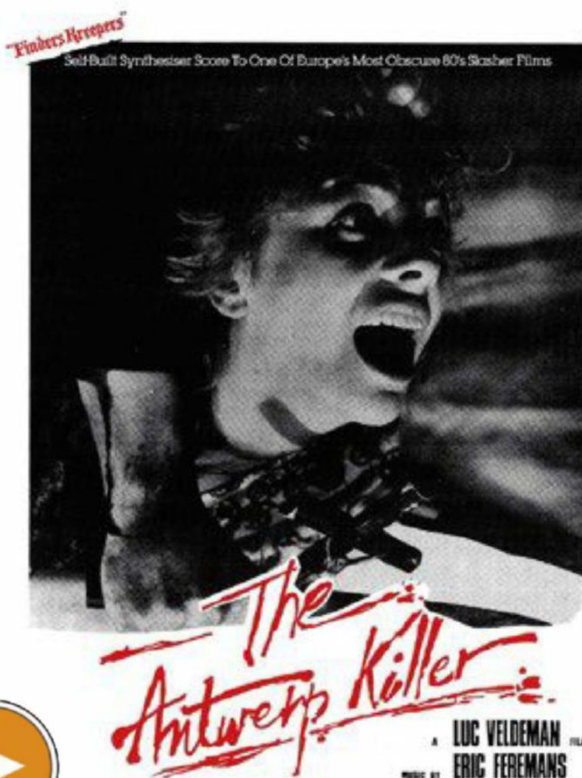
The highlight of *Pre-Cert* is the epic closing track, *Man is the Warmest Place to Hide*, which manages to encompass the sweep of Morricone's score for *The Thing* while also imbibing it with John Carpenter's edge of discomfort. The sheer hubris of trying to make something like this is magnificent, and the fact that Sellergen succeeds is a triumph. It's absolutely inspired, and is a piece to which you'll find yourself returning, again and again.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★★★★ 8

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



Finders Keepers has reissued two long-lost scores recently, and they're both necessities on your record shelf. First up is the Masahiko Sato score to **Belladonna of Sadness**, entitled simply **Belladonna**. It's a wonderfully weird, yet still accessible piece of cinema scoring that flirts between psychedelia and traditional Japanese themes. Finders Keepers has reissued it as a limited edition with an embossed pleather sleeve and a poster, although that's already sold out. The standard (and much cheaper) edition and digital download are readily available, however (see our review on page 91).

There's also Eric Feremans' **The Antwerp Killer**, which is a masterful piece of homespun electronic mastery by way of Belgium. The score to this 1983 B-movie slasher is head and shoulders above the film for which it was composed, and resembles nothing so much as Kraftwerk and the BBC Radiophonic Workshop hanging out after one too many cocktails. It's a woozy piece of brilliance

which bears seeking out.

While only a digital release via iTunes, the **Guardians of the Galaxy** animated series has received its own mix tape. Entitled **Cosmic Mix Vol. 1**, the compilation trades in a lot more classic rock than the pop of its cinematic predecessor, including far more Joe Walsh-related projects than



we thought we'd ever see in relation to a Disney series. Much like **Awesome Mix Vol. 1** revisited some lost gems like the Raspberries' *Go All the Way*, **Cosmic Mix** brings you the Hudson Brothers' *So You are a Star*, making this a lot better than your standard kiddie-related musical releases.

Speaking of kiddie-related musical releases, Fox Records released a soundtrack for **Alvin and the Chipmunks: Road Chip**, and I don't care at all. Wait, I tell a lie: I have no desire to hear *Uptown Funk* ever again, much less pitch-shifted up by several octaves, but I'm strangely intrigued by the possibility offered by *Turn Down For What*.

Mondo managed to keep their list of upcoming releases down to one for this issue (check out our Q&A with the label's Mo Shafeek online), but it's pretty cool: the vinyl debut of John Morris' score to **Clue**, just in time for the film's thirtieth anniversary. There will be six different versions, each limited to 250 copies – scarlet, peacock blue, white, green, plum and mustard, all for the various suspects. The only way it could be better was if it had a randomised groove that picked the last track – although we're not counting that out.

Music on Vinyl killed it with a stack of new releases. There's a double LP of Jessica Curry's score for the PlayStation 4 game, **Everybody's Gone To The Rapture**, a re-release of Paul Williams' soundtrack to the classic 1974 sci-fi horror music **Phantom of the Paradise**, Thomas Newman's score for the documentary **He Named Me Malala**, and two double LPs of Danny Elfman scores. The label's releasing **Big Fish**, which also includes songs by Pearl Jam and The Vogues, among others, as well as **Goosebumps**.



While **Goosebumps** was already announced as having a release through Waxwork Records, Music on Vinyl usually gets European rights to some properties – see also recent projects from them, such as **Mad Max: Fury Road**.

Speaking of Waxwork, it looks like they'll have the vinyl release of Douglas Pipes' score for **Krampus** coming soon – unsurprising, given their work on the **Trick 'r Treat** score, but still a lovely thing to have announced around the holidays. The score's been released digitally by Back Lot Music to coincide with the film's theatrical release, and is the perfect holiday music for all you horror fans. It mixes in bits and pieces of classic carols like *Auld Lang Syne* and *O Christmas Tree* with creepy, yet still seasonally appropriate tones. The **Krampus Carol of the Bells** is an absolute choral delight, as well.

If you've not picked up the latest Repeated Viewing 7-inch on Lunaris Records, please do so immediately. It's an excellent bit of '70s soundtrack worship, and might be our favourite release this year. The musician, also known by his given name, Alan Sinclair, will also see his **Frozen Existence** soundtrack LP released on Lunaris sometime next year, after a bit of a delay due to rejected test pressings.

In addition to a previously announced release of Rocky Gray's score to **The Barn**, Lunaris will also be making available for the first time on vinyl and cassette Manuel De Sica's original score to the very excellent, very weird **Dellamorte Dellamore** – also known as **Cemetery Man**. It will be a double LP, with new artwork from Devon Whitehead. This is sure to be a popular release, even if it's only the original score, without any of the bonus cuts from the 2008 Digitmovies compact disc.

Bloomsbury announced the most recent 16 selections for the next books in their 33 1/3 series. While it won't see publication until spring 2017 at the earliest, we can all start getting very excited for Clare Nina Norelli's book on Angelo Badalamenti's **Twin Peaks** OST. It marks only the second time in the series' history that it has touched on a soundtrack, with the first being Andrew Schartmann's book about Koji Kondo's **Super Mario Bros.** earlier this year.

On further David Lynch news, Varèse



Sarabande released a limited edition reissue of Angelo Badalamenti's **Blue Velvet** score. This blue vinyl version of 1000 copies is available only through Newbury Comics in the United States, and also includes Roy Orbison's iconic *In Dreams*. It's pricey, but given that the score's been unavailable on vinyl since 1988, and in pretty much any form since the '90s, it's worth getting.

Varèse will also be releasing Joe LoDuca's score to the **Ash vs. Evil Dead** series right around when this issue hits your hands. His work for the Starz series has been right in line with everything else he's done for the Deadite-laden franchise, and while we know this won't be everything, the fact that the show's been renewed for a second season means a second helping will be on its way at some point. We're also hoping for a collection of the classic rock the show's been utilising, because the use of some deep-cut classic rock has really made the series click. From Deep Purple's *Space Truckin'* to Loose by The Stooges, we haven't heard classic rock used this satisfyingly since the glory days of **Supernatural**.

New spoken word label Cadabra Records has launched with an announcement of a series of audio adaptations of the work of H. P. Lovecraft. Beginning with January's release of **The Hound** and **The Music of Erich Zann**, the label will begin a series of adaptations of the horror master's works. We know that the first release will be read by Andrew Leman, with special effects by Teratoma Sound Lab, and that



The Lurking Fear is due out in the spring of 2016, and **Pickman's Model** and **The Picture in the House** in the summer. You can subscribe to receive all three, along with a screen print and exclusive 7-inch of Lovecraft poems, as well.

Video game music label Brave Wave announced a staggering release for next year: a four-LP set of Yoko Shimomura's music for **Street Fighter II**. It will also be available as a CD, along with a download that will contain over 100 tracks. The initial vinyl pre-order sold out almost immediately, with a second pressing following immediately on its heels. Given that this is being billed as the definitive release of the music, we can't imagine there being too many copies left after everyone's holiday shopping is done.

Lastly, we were super-surprised to find out that Spacelab9's upcoming picture disc, **Adventure Time Presents: Marceline the Vampire Queen "Rock the Nightosphere"**, is the first time there's ever been any **Adventure Time** music officially released – in any format. We know, right? It seems super-weird that it's taken almost five years for it to happen, but we're so excited about this mini LP! Go buy it so we get more.

The label also dropped a triple LP and 7-inch box set featuring the full score to **Fallout 3**, just as **Fallout 4** hit stores. If the price tag on the Inon Zur full score is too much, there's also a single picture disc edition, featuring all the highlights. It's exclusive to Hot Topic stores, however – so, if you want it, you'll need to get your dark black make up on before having your mom drop you off at the mall.



BRAVE NEW WORDS



Haig, **Shadow and Bone** by Leigh Bardugo, **Someone Else's Skin** by Sarah Hilary, **The Baby at the Beach Café** by Lucy Diamond, **The Rotters' Club** by Jonathan Coe, **Too Good to be True** by Ann Cleeves, **Treachery** by S. J. Parris and **Whispering Shadows** by Jan-Phillipp Sendker.

CIAPHAS CAIN author joins Baen Books

Alex Stewart, who goes by the pseudonym of Sandy Mitchell, has signed a deal with Military SF specialists Baen books. The new series will be called **Shooting the Rift** and will be a sci-fi action adventure. Fans of the popular Black Library **Hero of the Imperium** books will apparently find much to love in Stewart's new series.

Neil Spring's THE WATCHERS optioned for TV

DNA Films and TV won the television rights to Neil Spring's science fiction thriller **The Watchers**, following a highly competitive auction. **The Watchers** is set during the Cold War, and details the Ministry of Defence's efforts to cover up UFO sightings. The book combines the history of UFO sightings with a tense paranormal drama, and seems like an ideal setup for a TV show.

James Tiptree, Jr. Award attracts Record Number of Entries

The James Tiptree Jr. Award is an annual literary prize for works of science fiction or fantasy that increase the reader's understanding of gender. It is named after science fiction author Alice B. Sheldon, who went under the male pseudonym of James Tiptree, Jr. in order to be taken seriously. This year's award has gained a record number of nominations (over two hundred and fifty).

THE BOOK OF STRANGE NEW THINGS wins Saltire Society Literary Award

Michel Faber's sci-fi tale of a Christian pastor sent to carry out missionary work amongst the native aliens on the planet Oasis has won the Saltire Society Literary Award, which is given out for literary and academic excellence that comes out of Scotland. The book saw off competition from both the literary and academic worlds, which is nice.

STARBURST's own book podcast, **THE BOOKWORM**, is filled with all the latest news, reviews and interviews and can be found on Twitter @radiobookworm

World Fantasy Award Abandons Lovecraft

The World Fantasy Award is one of the foremost accolades for Fantasy Literature. The caricatured head of H. P. Lovecraft served as the main trophy in the ceremony. The ugly-looking prize (sculpted by cartoonist Gahan Wilson) has been dropped. This follows on from a campaign to change the award; many questioned why a well-known horror writer was part of a fantasy award, whilst others expressed discomfort with Lovecraft as a figurehead, as he was an outspoken racist. There has been a predictable backlash against this change, but the response to the new policy has been mostly positive.

Stephen Baxter to Write WAR OF THE WORLDS Sequel

Stephen Baxter has written a sequel to H. G. Wells' science fiction novel **The War of the Worlds**. It will be published in 2017 by Gollancz. The appropriately named **The Massacre of Mankind** is set during the 1920s in London. The Martians return, but this time they have learned from their mistakes. Baxter promises to update the themes of Wells' original work, whilst bringing his own unique style to the classic novel.

Morrissey Wins Bad Sex Award

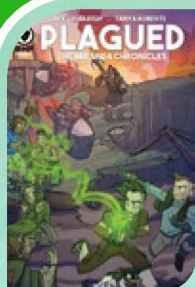
Okay, so it's not strictly genre, but this is too much fun not to report on. The Literary Review has awarded its annual 'Bad Sex' Award to moping miserable Mancunian muppet Morrissey, for his debut novel **List of the Lost**. The award is given out to the least sexy lovemaking scenes in a book. Overly pornographic works are not allowed, which explains a lack of 'Sexy Vampire Hunter' books in the list.

World Book Night 2016 Books Announced

The Reading Agency, who organise the annual World Book Night, has announced their books for 2016. The event is a celebration of reading and books that takes place on April 23rd. It relies on volunteers to give out hundreds of thousands of books to those who may not otherwise have the chance or opportunity to access books. The Reading Agency is a national charity, and 2016's selection is: **Am I Normal Yet?** by Holly Bourne, **Band of Brothers** by Stephen E. Ambrose and **I Can't Begin to Tell You** by Elizabeth Buchan. Other books you can get for free on the day include **Last Bus to Coffeetown** by J. Paul Henderson, **Love Poems** by Carol Ann Duffy, **Now You See Me** by Sharon Bolton, **Perfect Daughter** by Amanda Prowse, **Reasons to Stay Alive** by Matt

ED FORTUNE
HIGHLIGHTS
NOTEWORTHY
NEW TITLES

COMING SOON



PLAGUED: THE MIRANDA CHRONICLES VOLUME ONE
AUTHOR: G. CHUDLEIGH AND T. ROBERTS
PUBLISHER: BHP COMICS
RELEASE: MARCH 18TH

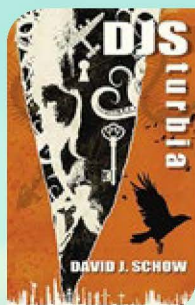
An interesting mix of sorcery and zombie apocalypse, **The Miranda Chronicles** has been causing a stir for some time. The graphic novel focuses on Thomas Mackie, a witch hunter who, along with his dog, Dex, hunts down those who wield supernatural powers. Mackie just wants a quiet life, so he makes for a reluctant hero. Of course, he bumps into the only witch who seems to know how to cure the Zombie Plague, and hi-jinks ensue.



ILLIDAN: WORLD OF WARCRAFT

AUTHOR: WILLIAM KING
PUBLISHER: TITAN
RELEASE DATE: APRIL 4TH

William King is better known for his work on the **Warhammer Fantasy** franchise. Now that Games Workshop have blown all of that up, however, it's interesting to note that he's now writing **Warcraft** fiction (fans of course, will recall that two are superficially set in similar settings). Illidan Stormrage is an Elven/Demon hybrid who claims to be the Lord of Outland, ruling from the Black Temple, who languished for 10,000 years in a lightless prison. It will be interesting to see what King does with this particular villain.



DJSTURBIA

AUTHOR: DAVID J. SCHOW
PUBLISHER: SUBTERRANEAN PRESS
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 31ST

David J. Schow's newest collection features his usual lucky thirteen short stories. We also get a poison-candy sampler of thirteen additional essays covering everything from **The Crow** to live snake-handling. Monsters in this anthology include Lovecraftian horrors, extraterrestrial insects, giant serpents, gargoyles, ghosts, gunfighters, and assassins. Oh, and apparently some awful thing called Bob.



THE STARS ASKEW

AUTHOR: RJURIK DAVIDSON
PUBLISHER: TOR
RELEASE DATE: APRIL 19TH

Continuing on from Davidson's excellent **Unwrapped Sky**, this latest book sees seditionist Maximilian sharing his mind with another being: the joker-god Aya. Aya leads Max to the realm of the Elo-Talern to seek a power source to remove Aya from Max's brain. But when Max and Aya return, they find the vigilants destroying the last remnants of power. If that excites you, then you should read this. If not, you should maybe read **Unwrapped Sky** to get a better idea as to what is going on.



COMIC INVENTION

AUTHORS: LAURENCE GROVE, PETER BLACK, SHA NAZIR, GARETH K. VILE
PUBLISHER: BHP COMICS
RELEASE: MARCH 18TH

Released to accompany the University of Glasgow's exhibition of the same name, this deluxe format box of books examines the origins of comic books themselves. The box includes a facsimile of the world's first comic, a study of the work of Frank Quitely, and essays on the invention and culture of comic books. This seems to be an unmissable collection and one we're very much looking forward to having on our bookshelf.



THE TIGER AND THE WOLF: ECHOES OF THE FALL - BOOK ONE

AUTHOR: ADRIAN TCHAIKOVSKY
PUBLISHER: MACMILLAN
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 11TH

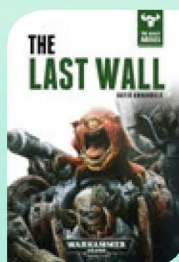
Maniye is an outcast; she is the love-child of two tribal leaders. Sadly for her, those tribes are at war. When strangers from the far south appear seeking allies in their own conflict, this is seen as an omen. The priests foresee danger, and a darkness falling across the land. Some say a great war is coming, overshadowing even Wolf ambitions. A time of testing and broken laws is near, but what spark will set the world ablaze. We expect great things from this novel, as Adrian Tchaikovsky seems to be getting more brilliant with every new novel he writes.



STAR WARS: AFTERMATH - LIFE DEBT

AUTHOR: CHUCK WENDIG
PUBLISHER: CENTURY
RELEASE DATE: MARCH 24TH

Frequently controversial but never boring, Chuck Wendig impressed fans with the first book in the **Star Wars** series, **Aftermath**. Set between **Return of The Jedi** and **The Force Awakens**, this book promises to expand on the exploits of the rag-tag band of heroes who did so well in the first book. We're hoping for another appearance of the horrifying battle droid, Mr Bones, the seemingly harmless murder machine that made the first book so entertaining. Expect fans of complaining about things to be utterly outraged, and actual **Star Wars** fans to be delighted.



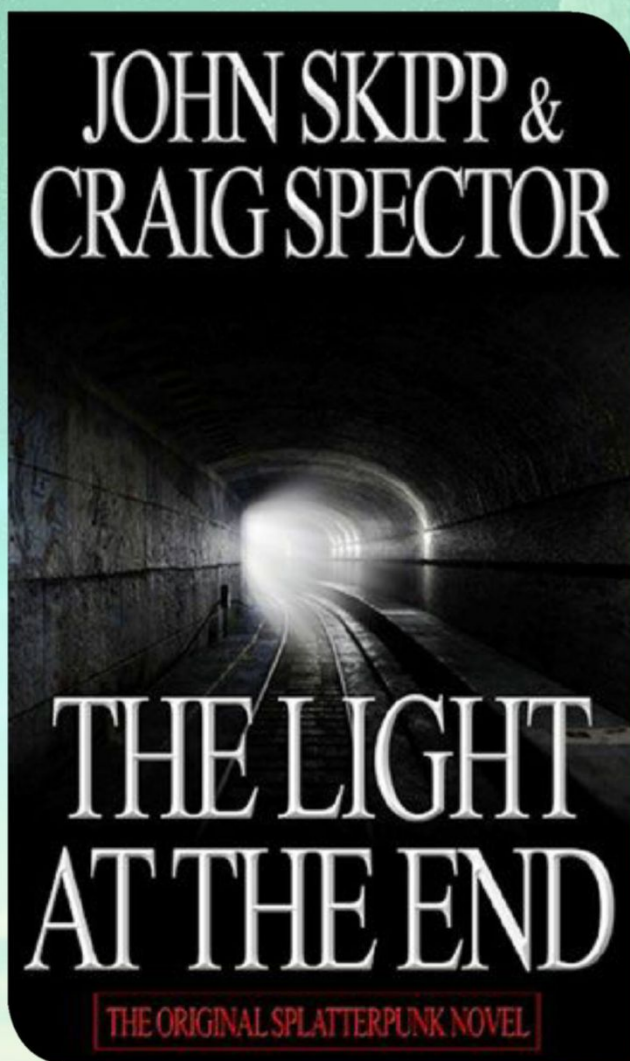
THE LAST WALL (THE BEAST ARISES)

AUTHOR: DAVID ANNANDALE
PUBLISHER: BLACK LIBRARY
RELEASE DATE: APRIL 19TH

Games Workshop's criminally under-exploited mine of amazing space opera continues with **The Last Wall**, a gripping tale of Humanity versus Space Orks. Despite the best efforts of the Emperor's finest forces, the Orks have fought their way to the Earth itself, and threaten to end mankind for good. As this is set 8000 years before the **Warhammer 40K** setting even starts, we suspect the Orks will fail in this task, but we're sure the whole affair will make for gripping reading.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS



I'm going to say it: we're all sick of vampires...

They've dominated our TV screens and every bestseller list; they've cropped up in comic books and inspired dozens of films, and they've transformed from calculating killers to sparkling teens. And after more than ten years of bloodsucker bombardment, we've tapped out. But if you're willing to give vampires one last chance, then make it John Skipp and Craig Spector's splatterpunk novel *The Light at the End*.

In case you've never heard of it before, splatterpunk is a 1980s and 1990s horror movement that focused on vivid, gory description. *The Light at the End*, published in 1986, is considered to be one of the first splatterpunk novels and it definitely lives up to the name. The story centres on Rudy, a newly-made vampire with a bleach blond pompadour who the Internet claims was Joss Whedon's inspiration for

Spike. He stalks the subway tunnels of New York, killing indiscriminately and using his powers to terrorise his ex-girlfriend. As his body count grows, and his victims start to rise from the dead, old friends and concerned citizens band together to stop him.

It is so refreshing to read a traditional vampire novel. *The Light at the End* is dark and gross, and Rudy is no romantic character. He is murderous, cold, and cruel; he hypnotises people and terrorises them in their dreams, and his only seductions are so he can feed. You can't sympathise with him. No matter how hard you try, you can't justify his actions. He is unapologetically awful, and frankly, I love it. Vampires as true villains have become unique on the landscape of horror fiction, and so it's a huge treat to read a book that not only sticks to the classic narrative but revels in it. Rudy behaves exactly like a vampire should, including having every weakness: sunlight, holy water, and crosses. He also makes use of the modern landscape he lives in, hiding in the dark subway system so he can hunt at all hours. Skipp and Spector do a wonderful job at bringing the traditional vampire story forward, and in doing so they make it completely unpredictable. This book could have easily been a salute to *Dracula*, but our authors play with the classic plot devices.

They pick them apart and destroy them; refashioning them as tricks; much like Rudy does with the people around him. And I love a book that aims to be that unsettling.

Rudy isn't the only fascinating character in this book. *The Light at the End* almost overwhelms you with how many characters it has, intimately introducing you to key players and cannon fodder. Everyone in this book is important - students,

messengers, wannabe authors and small business owners - and everyone contributes something to Rudy's destruction. The city itself is also an important character; working with and against Rudy's enemies. That's actually something the book focuses on a lot: teamwork. Or rather, the importance of the group. In horror fiction, most creatures and killers strike when characters are alone. It's only when in a group that safety is assured, and it's only as part of a group that characters can find the strength and resources to take down the killer. Even if an individual delivers the final blow, it's still on the back of teamwork. It's a perfect example of art drawing from life, because aren't we the most afraid when we're alone? Aren't we told to travel in groups at night? And do we not accomplish great things when we work together, forming bonds and sharing strengths? I'm not sure if that's the message *The Light at the End* is trying to send, but it's certainly a wonderful one to read.

By this point, *The Light at the End* must seem pretty perfect, but it does have one flaw, and that's the prose. While it's written in incredible detail, it could stand to have its sentences streamlined. Some of its similes could be cut. With one solid edit, it could be fifty pages lighter, and I think the better for it.

I hope I've convinced you, weary horror fan, to read *The Light at the End* because it is an amazing book. It's brutal and bloody, and outright disgusting, and a perfect introduction to the splatterpunk movement. Skipp and Spector have given us a book as big as New York, and a vampire we can be perversely proud of. You can find it as an eBook (as it's now out of print), or used at second-hand bookshops and online.

Based on the 2014 Saboteur short listed spoken word show

Colin J Davies

2001

a space ode & ditty

**A fandom drama of
memoirs and poetry**

Funny, informative and at times touching, this book is a love letter to all those TV programmes, films, books and games that have meant so much to so many.

"...unlike anything you have probably read before.
...the memoirs are rich and entertaining and
the poetry is both funny and poignant, and also very accessible."



John Townsend - Starburst Magazine - 8/10

Some comments about the show left on the Saboteur Awards website:

"A brilliant hour of geekdom writ large. It's so dense with pop cultural references that one wonders how he managed to fit any other words in."

"Colin is a fantastic writer and uses every word to great effect. Nothing is wasted."

*"A witty and wonderful trip through Sci-Fi and comic fandom.
A great balance of comedy, pathos and poetry"*

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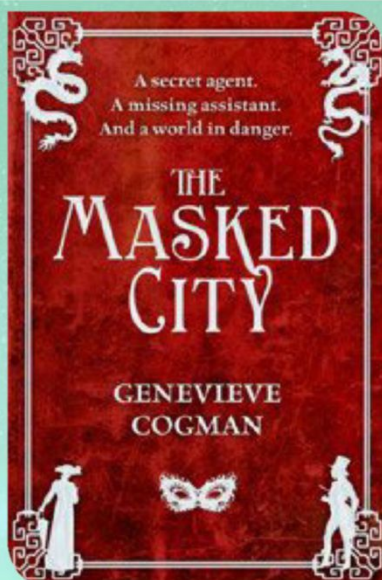
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Available at



REVIEWS

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



THE MASKED CITY

AUTHOR: GENEVIEVE COGMAN / PUBLISHER: PAN
/ RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Irene the Librarian is back and we are very glad to see her. The Masked City

is a sequel to Genevieve Cogman's debut novel, *The Invisible Library*. The essential conceit of the novels is rather fun; the multiverse is split between Order (controlled by Dragons) and Chaos (controlled by the Fae). In the middle is *The Library*, a pan-dimensional realm filled with books from everywhere possible. Its agents, the Librarians, use the power of words to gather essential books and attempt to keep balance.

The Masked City begins in the same world as the last one; a steampunk world where the incursion of the Fae means that there are zeppelins dotting the sky and that incredible things are done with the right sort of clockwork. Our favourite book botherer, Irene, is put in a pickle when her companion and crush Kai is kidnapped by the Fae and dragged off to another world. Not only is this terribly inconvenient for Irene, it could also mean war between the Dragons and the Fae, because of Kai's connection to Dragons.

This results in a quick tour of other parts of the multiverse. Worlds at the far end of Chaos are high-fantasy style mashes of magic and strangeness, whereas those realities with too much order are all about sharp suits, skyrise

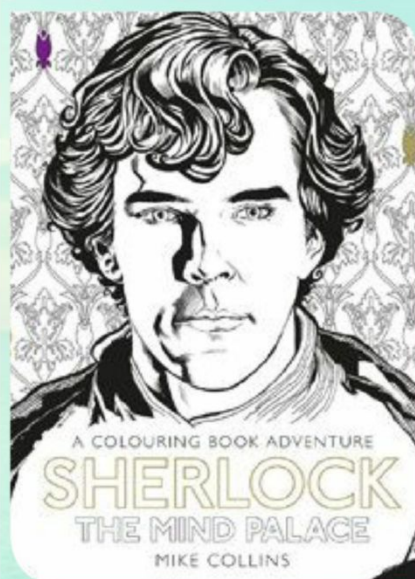
buildings and surveillance. This, mixed in with a clever (and simplified) meta-narrative on the nature of stories, makes for highly entertaining reading.

There is a growing subgenre of fantasy that seems to be rather British. Stories in which fantastic things lurk beneath the everyday and only a handful of specially trained people can deal with the strangeness are pretty standard fare, but the twist is that our heroes are hobbled by layers of bureaucracy and human resource management that tends to get in the way. Charles Stross's *Laundry* series and Ben Aaronovitch's *Rivers of London* books both do this, but Genevieve Cogman's books mix high fantasy with bureaucratic charm quite effortlessly to form what is essentially a thrilling crime drama. With *Dragons and Fae* thrown into the mix for good measure.

The Masked City is an exercise in world-building and enchanting storytelling. Cogman's style is to throw ideas at you at a reasonably high pace, making it very hard not to turn the page. Charming and spectacular fun.

ED FORTUNE

+++++++ 8



SHERLOCK: THE MIND PALACE - THE OFFICIAL COLOURING BOOK

ARTIST: MIKE COLLINS / PUBLISHER: BBC
BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Like any media industry, publishing is constantly looking for the next big thing that will lure in a different kind of audience and engage them in ways that haven't been tried before. The current trend is colouring books with very, very complicated patterns. These are aimed squarely at adults who need to do something relaxing with their hands or just fancy learning a new skill (yes, colouring is a skill. Ask a professional colourist).

Sherlock: The Mind Palace - The Official Colouring Book is a collection of very dense black and white drawings by Doctor Who comic strip artist Mike Collins. You probably know Mike's work if you've ever picked up any comic book inspired by a popular genre franchise. What we have here is some rather good drawings of the stars of the TV show *Sherlock* in scenes that will remind you of various episodes of the series. Collins has made each illustration as elaborate as possible, so there are plenty of little spaces for you to colour in.

This is not a colouring book for crayons (though it may be a challenge to try). This is a job for your finest colouring pens and sharpies, or even a paint brush, which is rather the point. This should take you an absolute age to do. There's also the glee of painting Benedict Cumberbatch bright

green, if that's what you fancy. The art is clear, distinctive and very pretty.

The blurb on the back promises 'clues' to be uncovered, but that isn't really the case. You get the feeling that the BBC wanted to have some sort of clever puzzle theme with hard to decipher illustrations (perhaps in the style of Kit Williams' *Masquerade*) but didn't really give the artist time to do this. What we have instead is a *Where's Wally?*-style spot the object challenge. Various pages have an incongruous thing (such as a phone or a piece of graffiti) that you have to find. Each one is related to one of the stories from the *Sherlock* TV show in some way, but a mystery it is not. Nor are any of the pictures a 'mind palace'; *Sherlock*'s mind is a well organised machine, these drawings are way too busy for that.

Sherlock: The Mind Palace - The Official Colouring Book is a very pretty challenge for fans of colouring-in who also happen to be fans of the BBC's *Sherlock*. It's a great idea for a gift for someone, though you want to give them some good pens to play with at the same time.

ED FORTUNE

+++++++ 7



WITH A VOICE THAT IS OFTEN STILL CONFUSED BUT IS BECOMING EVER LOUDER AND CLEARER

AUTHOR: J.R. HAMANTASCHEN
PUBLISHER: WEST PIGEON PRESS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Not an easy title to get your head around, and the stories within aren't much easier either. J. R. Hamantaschen, author of the highly memorable, terrifyingly bleak short fiction collection *You Shall Never Know Security* (2011) follows up with this second book of stories – *With a Voice That is Often Still Confused But is Becoming Ever Louder and Clearer*. Whether the title refers to a protagonist, antagonist or the author himself... one isn't quite sure, but it's captivating, nonetheless.

There are nine tales to this collection, each of satisfying length and immediately striking, from first page to last. Rarely is the distinction between horror and dark fiction as distinct as it is reading Hamantaschen's

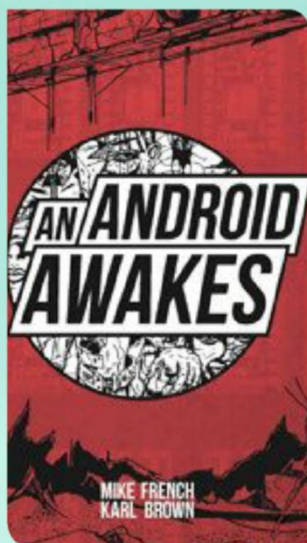
work – stories that will grip you for their humanity and soul rather than any specific external threat. These here are works that deal in paranoia and existential dread rather than, say, the fear of taking a machete to the face. Which isn't to say that the author doesn't have a little fun with it from time to time – see *Cthulhu*, *Zombies*, *Ninjas*, and *Robots!*; or, a *Special Snowflake* in an *Endless Scorching Universe*, for example – a beautiful takedown of Lovecraft fandom, ingeniously set at a Lovecraft convention.

To say much more would be to spoil the many surprises contained within, but there's not a dud among the lot. Hamantaschen's prose is poetic, witty and effortlessly

heartbreaking at times. Even the story titles are a work of beauty (*Soon Enough This Will Essentially Be a True Story* being a favourite) and Hamantaschen even manages to imbue pieces such as his blurbs ('uncharacteristically kind words'), dedications ('none' gets a solid laugh) and introduction with a sense of self-deprecating wit and poignancy.

It's been a while since *You Shall Never Know Security*, but this second collection was well worth the wait. Confused or no, Hamantaschen has marked his distinctive, often scary, frequently depressing voice as one worth listening to.

JOEL HARLEY



AN ANDROID AWAKES

AUTHOR: MIKE FRENCH
ARTIST: KARL BROWN
PUBLISHER: ELSEWHEN PRESS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

From author Mike French and illustrator Karl Brown, *An Android Awakes* is a fascinating collection of short stories, set in a world where autonomous machines now create the arts.

Android Writer PD121928 is in dire straits. Employed by the Android Publishing Program, PD121928 only has 14 attempts left at creating a story that will be accepted by the company or he will be deactivated. With his wife taken away from him, PD121928 lives in solitude, resorting to his allowance of prostitutes and drugs to assist him.

Accompanied by Karl Brown's intricate drawings, *An Android Awakes* is a wonderful little read. Each one of PD121928's stories is documented throughout the book, and almost every single one feels like it could be extended into its very own novel. Several themes

are tackled in each tale, from android detectives, to great explorers, and even frozen cats – Mike French's book has it all.

There are some truly memorable storylines that will possibly haunt the reader for some time to come. It can be brutally violent and sexy, meshing together modern life with some surreal futuristic themes. Some submissions may resonate with readers, particularly *Inside Richard Steinberger*, where brain implants have killed any passion for life.

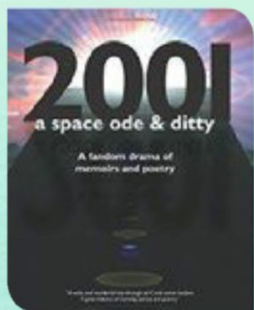
Each story has some link to previous entries, and PD121928's creative struggle is brilliantly written. It's extremely easy to pick up as well, as every submission is limited to roughly 1,000 words. Fans of 2000 AD and dystopian sci-fi will be doing themselves a disservice if they don't read *An Android Awakes*, as it really

does hit all the right notes.

Karl Brown's illustrations perfectly capture the narrative too, with a style that harks back to traditional 2000 AD. Taking his inspiration from heavy metal music, Brown's artwork completely nails Mike French's vision. Perhaps PD121928's career as an Android Writer could be explored a little more, but that's only due to a desire to see Mike French expand on his ingenious ideas even more. Hopefully in the future, French will explore some of the submissions in greater detail.

An Android Awakes is a delightful read which boasts a truly unique concept. It's unlike anything else available right now as it's undoubtedly one of the coolest and most fascinating reads out there.

MATT WELLS



2001: A SPACE ODE & DITTY

AUTHOR: COLIN J. DAVIES
PUBLISHER: WORDRABBIT
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When first approaching Colin J. Davies' book 2001: *A Space Ode & Ditty*, an open mind is essential. The cover declares it "A fandom drama of memoirs and poetry", but this offers little real insight into what you might find inside. Venture in though and Davies' witty anecdotes and observations will very quickly hook you, and at less than 80 pages it will all then be over far too quickly.

Developed from a spoken word show first performed in November 2014, this book is a nostalgic trip that documents the spiritual journey of a self-

confessed geek; a man so enamoured with pop culture and nerd-dom that every key event in his life is notable by the references that surround it. Perhaps this is what may prove to be slightly divisive. If you lived through the same experiences, enjoyed the same films for the first time, and coveted the same merchandise, then Davies' book will resonate deep within your soul. If you didn't then perhaps it may prove a little too indulgent in places, but the humour and intelligent writing are still deeply engaging. Whatever your

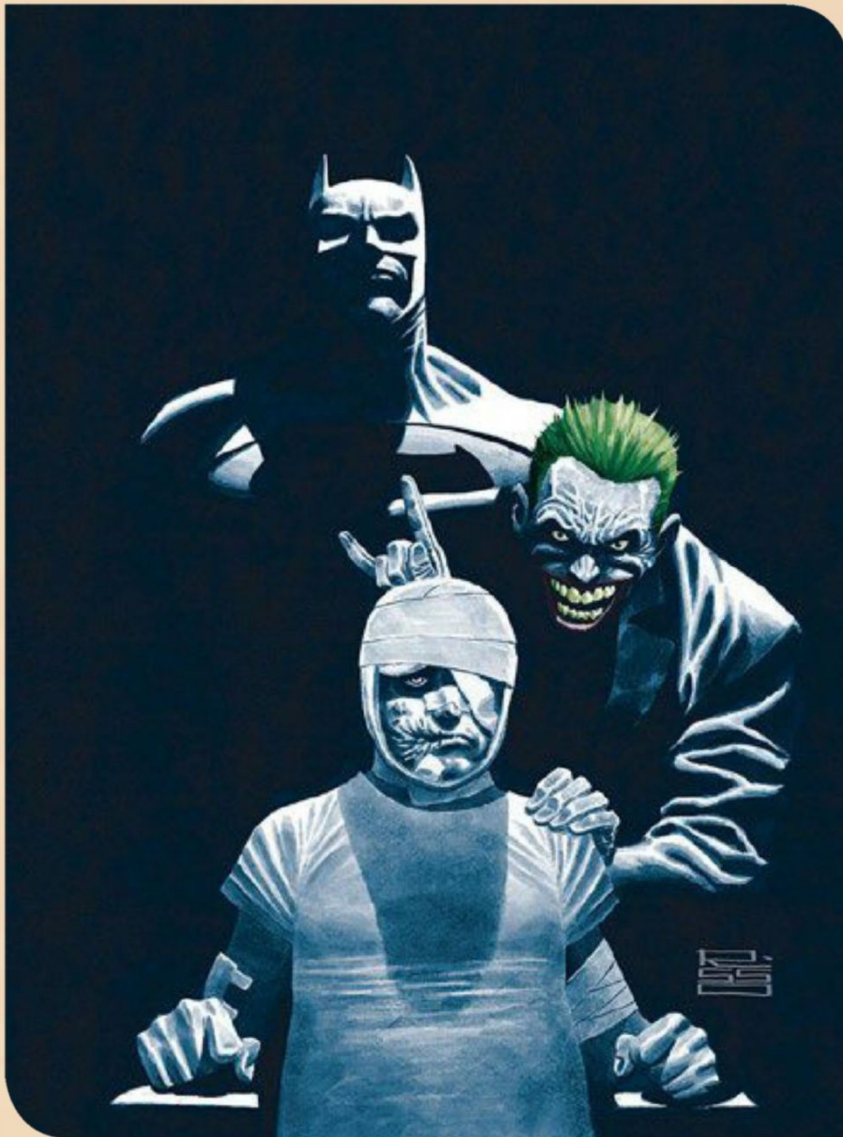
preferences, this is a book worth picking up and one unlike anything you have probably read before. It's also worth returning to that cover line, but with a little embellishment. In Davies' book, the memoirs are rich and entertaining and the poetry is both funny and poignant, and also very accessible. But more than that this is simply a thoroughly entertaining read, albeit a brief one.

JOHN TOWNSEND



VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS MONITOR DUTY TO BRING YOU THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOKS



end of the Bat-spectrum, there's the news that the legendary *Animated Series* creator Paul Dini is returning to Batman! True story, and so is the one he'll be telling: *Dark Night: A True Batman Story* is a non-fiction tale, retelling the time Dini was mugged and left severely injured, back in 1993. Using Batman and his rogue's gallery as voices that guide him through his healing process, the graphic novel will be illustrated by Eduardo Risso and published via Vertigo in June 2016.

The Emerald Knight is back! That's Hal Jordan returning as Green Lantern, from an extended absence (although not quite as long as the time he was dead), back with a dodgy haircut, designer stubble and hobo jacket. Hal can be found back in the pages of *Green Lantern #47*, although you'll be better off picking up the Harley Quinn for some reason), for its fantastic Darwyn Cooke artwork and lack of awful Hal Jordan fashion sense. Hey mister, are you a hipster or a hobo?

No longer DC, but sticking with the returns theme – we announced last month Rob Liefeld's mystery project, speculating on whether it might be something Deadpool related. Well, those ruminations have turned out to be correct, and Marvel has announced that said 'killer' project will indeed be Deadpool. *Deadpool: Bad Blood* teams the Uwe Boll of comics with ComicsAlliance writer Chris Sims, and Chad Bowers of *X-Men '92* fame. The graphic novel will arrive in 2016, and will star not only Deadpool but a whole host of Liefeld Marvel favourites, including Cable, Domino and more.

Two very popular things: Marvel Comics' James Patterson (yes, the Alex Cross crime author) and adult colouring books (not porn). The two meet in *Colour Your Own James Patterson!* – a version of his *Max Ride* comic book that will give fans the chance to, well, colour their own James Patterson (!). This is due in 2016, to an adult colouring bookshelf near you.

Almost as inexplicably popular as adult colouring books (still not porn) are things based on amusement park rides. We've had *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the altogether less successful Eddie Murphy vehicle *The Haunted Mansion*, and now the latter is getting its own book from Marvel. Corporate synergy, you say? Maybe a little. Launching from the Disney Kingdoms banner, *The Haunted Mansion* is due in March, with Joshua Williamson and Jorge Coelho on creative duties. Spooky. No word on Eddie Murphy's

So long 2015, hello New Year, and welcome to the year's final edition of *View from the Watchtower* and our last look at the comic book news from hereabouts.

We kick off, as we have done so many months in a row, with a story I had thought we could at last lay to rest (sorry). It's here, it exists and I even reviewed it: a sigh of relief was imminent, as I thought this column safe from *The Dark Knight III: The Master Race* news at last ('What's that', you say? 'Another variant cover?'). Apparently not. What we had all thought

to be the final part of Frank Miller's *Dark Knight* Trilogy might not be so final after all. Nor may the trilogy part be so accurate. Miller has confirmed that a fourth instalment is on the cards – a sequel to a miniseries that has barely itself begun. Furthermore, it's suggested that he'll be showing co-writer Azzarello the door and carrying on solo. "I thoroughly applaud what Brian's doing," Miller said, "but now that he's doing his, it's now a four-part series. I'm doing the fourth." Sigh. And so the hype train continues.

If that doesn't excite, at the opposite



involvement on the project (he won't be).

On his way out of the Marvel Universe for now is the perma-grumpy semi-cool alternative to Aquaman, Namor, the latest to be killed off in Marvel's unofficial (and purely speculative) war against characters they're not licensed to use in their own movies. 'Well, if we can't have them, no-one can,' is how it presumably goes, as Namor is (or was, depending on when you read this) iced in the pages of December's *Squadron Supreme*. Goodbye, Marvel's first mutant. No, this won't make people care about the Inhumans now. And yeah, we all know he'll be back.

This toys-out-of-the-pram approach to comic book writing isn't stopping them from taking advantage of a certain X-Men movie out in 2016, though. In addition to starring in *X-Men: Apocalypse*, the titular supervillain will star in X-Men event *Apocalypse Wars*, running throughout all the main X-books in some as yet unknown – but no doubt nefarious – capacity. Sucks to be Namor, but as long as your movies make money (hi X-Men, and presumably, Deadpool), you'll always have a place in the Marvel line-up.

In cheerier news, Marvel has announced the addition of a more international version of their comics to the line-up, being *Avengers K* – a Korean adaptation of some classic Avengers stories. Starting with *Age of Ultron* (retitled *Avengers vs. Ultron*), it'll retell the story in inimitable South Korean style, brightly illustrated and action-packed. This is due in May, in oversized format and, hopefully, without the stupid Hulk/Black Widow romance they put in the movie.

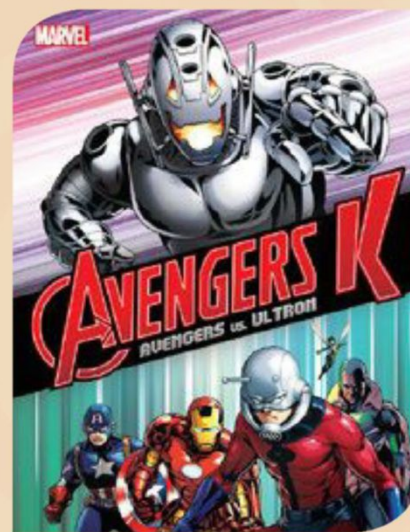
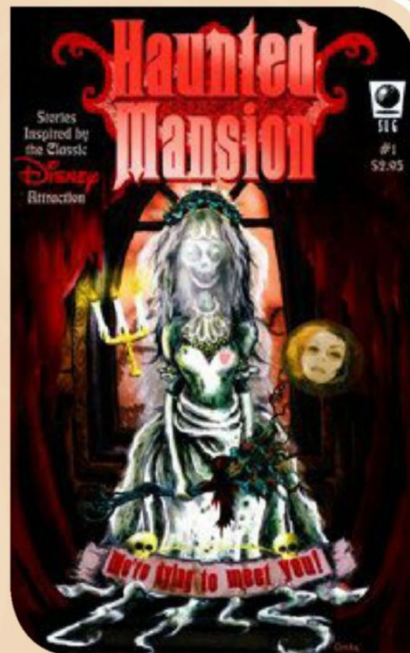
Another happy return for the books – Titan Comics and BBC Worldwide have announced that we'll soon be seeing a fan favourite Doctor back in action. That's Doctor number four, Tom Baker, starring in a brand-new miniseries alongside popular companion Sarah Jane Smith.



The five-part story will be titled *Gaze of the Medusa*, and will be written by 2000 AD's Gordon Rennie, with art from Brian Williamson. Expect *Doctor Who: Gaze of the Medusa* to land in March 2016, accompanied by the usual variant covers and retailer exclusives.

And so another year draws to a close/another begins (depending on when you read this). What 2016 will bring is really anyone's guess, although at the rate we're going on here, one would expect it to be mostly *Dark Knight Returns* sequels and Archie comics (adult colouring edition). Colour your own dystopia! In any event, I can be reached at the usual Twitter and e-mail handles, dystopian colouring book future or no.

Joel Harley can be contacted at:
joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com
 and tweeted @joelharley



REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



BATMAN/SUPERMAN VOLUME 4: SIEGE

WRITER: GREG PAK / ARTIST: ARDIAN SYAF
/ PUBLISHER: DC COMICS / RELEASE DATE:
DECEMBER 31ST

For years Superman has faced intellectual businessmen, power-crazed gods and unstoppable monsters, but this time, Superman's worst nightmare finally comes into play: his own Joker. A powerful Kryptonian who not only knows all of Superman's secrets, but is also willing to kill anyone who has ever stood by him in order to both break him and ultimately destroy him. Superman turns to Batman for help, but with this murderous super-powered

madman leaving no clues behind and no leads following him, has the World's Greatest Detective been outwitted?

The idea of Superman having his own Joker is a fascinating and unique concept that shows incredible promise at the beginning of this storyline, but in actuality, this formidable adversary is much more like Superman's Hush more than anything else, despite the maniacal laugh he possesses. He's a villain with a connection to Superman's past, mainly with that of his father Jor-El, and the big bad's interaction with him makes sense as to why he is coming for Superman so viciously, even though his motive and goal is similar, nay identical, to that of General Zod's in both Superman II and Man of Steel. Plus, the mystery of the villain's true identity ultimately fizzles out. The fact he gets defeated quickly and has no proper showdown with Superman adds to the sense of anticlimax.

Despite this, writer Greg Pak does successfully manage to create a story that's very personal to Superman, whilst offering some more history on Krypton with the infamous bottled city of Kandor playing an important factor in the story. The story is also well paced with no sign of unnecessary padding to spread it out, the entire cast of characters show believable reactions, and it really establishes the relationship between each player. There are chunks of clunky dialogue here and there, but the story does an excellent job of keeping its momentum and surprising the audience.

There's one memorable moment where a volunteer dresses up as Superman in order to entertain kids at a hospital and

something truly shocking happens. It's a really sad scene that carries real weight and emotion, and it's fitting how that stays with Superman and motivates him to find and stop his nemesis. However, the whole resolution and ending is lacklustre as it cheaply uses the conventional deus ex machina-style device of wrapping things up and stopping the threat. The writers should be beyond this by now.

The artwork by Ardian Syaf is simply flawless; very nicely detailed, the placing of the panels moves the story along nicely and it can pretty much tell most of the story on its own without the use of words. Sandra Hope Archer and Jaime Mendoza handle ink work, while Ulises Arreola handles the colouring side of things. All three contribute greatly in bringing Syaf's drawings to life in glorious fashion.

Siege is a classic storyline where the whole is less greater than the sum of its parts, yet those parts make some compelling storytelling, allowing us a more personal insight into Superman, why he does what he does to protect humanity, and his relationship with Batman. The ultimate enemy of the piece is somewhat disappointing by the end after a promising build-up (and unsurprising if you are a die-hard Supes fan) and the resolution to the threat was lame, but it stands as a great team-up story whilst promising bigger things to come for both the Man of Steel and the Caped Crusader.

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★ 8



JACK HAMMER: POLITICAL SCIENCE

WRITER: BRANDON BARROWS / ARTIST: IONIC
/ PUBLISHER: ACTION LAB ENTERTAINMENT /
RELEASE DATE: JANUARY 13TH

It's always a pleasure to see new indie talent rising up through the ranks of comic book entertainment. Political Science (previously issued in a limited edition print run of only 500, each signed and numbered by the creators) is not a superhero epic and surprisingly, it's not an origin story in the traditional sense – what backstory needs to be told is related briskly as the narrative unfolds. The backdrop and the supporting characters are there to be accepted, not explained in minute detail.

Jack McGriskin is a tough-talking, no-prisoner-taking, quick-fisted private detective with a class four superhuman activities licence who has been hired to find Eddie Newman, a missing person. When Newman turns up dead in an alley, with a very large hole through his midsection, McGriskin's case takes on a new dimension – one that puts him on

the trail of a super-powered killer called The Black Smile. The trail will take a treacherous route from the seedy back alleys of Boston to Congress itself.

It's certainly a rapid-fire page turner, with the speed of the sharp dialogue matching the machine gun pace of the story, as it unfolds in four parts. We certainly enjoyed the subtle nods to icons of the comics industry such as a reference to a Senator Stan Goodman (Marvel Comics founder Stan Lee and publisher Martin Goodman). As a debut graphic novel, it's very impressive and bodes well for the futures of Barrows and Ionic – not to mention leaving the audience hungry for some more exploits of McGriskin.

ROBIN PIERCE

★★★★★★★ 7



GHOSTBUSTERS: GET REAL

WRITER: ERIK BURNHAM / ARTIST: DAN SCHOENING / PUBLISHER: IDW PUBLISHING / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Real Ghostbusters are back and, as usual, they're up to their necks in trouble and ectoplasm as angry spooks raise merry hell around New York City.

This time around they have bigger problems than usual in the shape of a giant god, a 'primordial entity' called Proteus

whose supernatural powers rival even those of the mighty Gozer. When the Real Gs try to stop the big angry P from using Ecto- like a bowling pin, they're transported into an alternative dimension to find themselves sharing a not-unfamiliar-looking firehouse with the 'actual' Ghostbusters we know and love from the live-action movie. The trick is getting themselves back to their own dimension, which might come quicker than they expected because Proteus has conjured forth a three-headed devil hound to track them down. Luckily, because there are numerous possible dimensions with very different versions of the Ghostbusters in each one, the devil dog has quite a job on its paws.

For some bizarre reason (but who cares?), Proteus seems to have some paranormal bee in his bonnet about capturing the Real Ghostbusters before they can capture him, which means the Real Ghostbusters and the... ahem... 'real' Ghostbusters must team up to defeat Proteus before he reaches them first. The result is some pretty smart Three Doctors style repartee between our two teams of look-a-like heroes, especially between the two Peter Venkmans who, true to form, try hard to out-smartmouth each other (and it's good to see that the 'live action' Venkman at least partially resembles Bill Murray). In fact, the characterisations in Erik Burnham's fast moving script are spot-on - even if some of the gags are a little weak - and Dan Schoening's artwork is very good indeed, even if Proteus himself

looks like an over-the-hill He-Man missing his sword of Grayskull.

There's the usual comforting technobabble about 'exigent manifestations' and 'free-roaming vapours' and a nice nod towards the sadly missed Harold Ramis, but because Proteus is essentially a pretty whiney supervillain, the supposedly explosive showdown at the end of the story just limps to the finish line. Although, if we're honest, didn't Ghostbusters 2 have the same problem?

Set proton packs to fun and don't step on Slimer.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★ 8



21ST CENTURY TANK GIRL

WRITER: ALAN MARTIN / ARTIST: VARIOUS / PUBLISHER: TITAN COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For the first time in 20 years, Tank Girl co-creator Jamie Hewlett teams up with original writer Alan Martin in 21st Century Tank Girl, an explosive new graphic novel featuring work from six different artists. Published by Titan Comics, 21st Century Tank Girl is a celebration of one of comics' best characters, boasting comic book

strips, pin-ups and even short stories. It's a colourful menagerie of talent, with work from Brett Parson and Jim Mahfood, to name a few.

21st Century Tank Girl does everything a Tank Girl comic should in terms of its main themes. It perfectly fits the style of the character, by being vibrant and punchy. However, for a book that apparently celebrates Hewlett's long-awaited return with Martin, it's extremely thin on their collaboration. Although Tank Girl has had numerous artists in the past, Jamie Hewlett's work on the comic was the definitive look. Known for his work with Gorillaz, Hewlett's underground style is favoured amongst fans. Unfortunately, there's just too little of his fantastic artwork in the new graphic novel, appearing in only 6 pages of a 100+ page book.

However, the rest of the graphic novel is far from bad. Brett Parson's artwork is slightly cartoonish, but extremely fitting for the punk theme. Jim Mahfood's distinctive line-work is much wilder, and he presents Tank Girl in a more explosive story. They both do a remarkable job alongside the other artists, and these stories feature old favourites, such as Booga and Jet Girl.

Some of the shorts follow the tried and tested formula of classic Tank Girl, but they feel too haplessly thrown together between blocks of prose and pin-ups. It's still as violent and sexy as it used to be, but 21st Century Tank Girl is lacking a certain

something. Martin's writing hugely benefits from Hewlett's style, but without it Tank Girl feels rather ordinary.

Still, fans of Tank Girl may feel like Titan Comics' new graphic novel is a worthy purchase. It does support a varied amount of colourful artwork, alongside text that will keep some readers happy. Brett Parson's splash pages are also beautiful, and Mahfood's unusual style is pleasing. Unfortunately, it just feels like a slightly disappointing return for the rambunctious Tank Girl.

MATT WELLS

★★★★★★★ 6



TIME PIECE

by Paul Carey





ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY ROUND
UP FROM THE
WORLD OF ANIME
AND MANGA WITH
DOMINIC CUTHBERT



Netflix May Be Planning to Produce its Own Anime

During an interview at the DealBook conference on November 3rd, Netflix CEO Reed Hastings said he is 'hopeful' that, in the future, his company will produce 'a great anime show'. With plans to spend \$5 billion on new content for the streaming service in 2016, he referred to the Netflix original, French contracted, Brazilian directed and acted show **Narcos**, based on the exploits of the Colombian drug lord Pablo Escobar, as an example of how they want to expand on their international collaboration with production companies.

NEW YU-GI-OH! Movie's Release Date Confirmed

The next movie in the **Yu-Gi-Oh!** franchise has had its theatrical release date confirmed for April 23rd, 2016, just before Japan's Golden Week holiday period. **Yu-Gi-Oh! The Dark Side of Dimensions** takes place six months after the end of the manga, and is described as an 'after episode' of the original anime series. Mangaka Kazuki Takahashi is on board as executive producer and scriptwriter, and has provided the character designs. Satoshi Kuwabara of the **Yu-Gi-Oh! Zexal** series leads the project as director, and all of the inaugural anime's voice cast return to portray their respective characters.



SOUTH PARK Includes Fan Art in Yaoi-centric Episode

South Park drew on its global following's NSFW fan art to make an episode dedicated to yaoi. Viewers were asked to contribute by sending in their own art, and as a result staff received over 1500 pieces to work from for Season 19's sixth episode **Tweek x Craig**, which aired in the US on October 28th.

Studio Sanzigen Celebrates 10th Anniversary

Sanzigen, the CGI animation company behind **Arpeggio of Blue Steel**, is celebrating its 10th anniversary with an original anime project. The opening of the show's official website revealed the title, **Bubuki Buranki**, along with the project's staff, the top page displaying the taglines 'I will fight. With swords in both my hands', 'I will fight. To be the heart for everyone', 'I will fight. Cocking my gun', and 'I will fight. Piercing with my spear'. Daizen Komatsuda, who was assistant director for **Evangelion: 3.0 You Can (Not) Redo** and episode director for **Kill la Kill**, takes his first lead directorial position for this series.

TV Special to Capture Doraemon Voice Actress' Career

A dramatised TV special called **Together for a Long Time: The Story of Voice Actress Nobuyo Oyama** will tell of Oyama's 26 years voicing Doraemon the robot cat. Sawa Suzuki, who played Takeo's mother Yuriko Gouda in the **Ore Monogatari!!** live-action film, stars as Oyama in the special which will premiere in Japan on December 13th.

Miyu Matsuki 1977 - 2015

On October 27th, Miyu Matsuki, the seiyuu and singer remembered as Isumi Saginomiya in **Hayate the Combat Butler** and more recently as Anna Ninomiya in **Shimoneta**, passed away from pneumonia which surfaced at the start of the year. In May, it was announced that she would be voicing Charlotte Diamandias in an anime adaptation of Jun Misaki's light novel **Hundred**, but as yet there have been no revised details released on the anime's progress or premiere date. Our thoughts are with Matsuki-san's loved ones at this time.

NORAGAMI Stage Play Coming

A **Noragami** stage play based on Adachitoka's manga will open in January, starring Hiroki Suzuki (**Yowamushi Pedal** stage play's Yasutomo Arakita) as Yato. It will run for eight performances from the 28th - 31st at the AiiA 2.5 Theater Tokyo and is based on an original story by Adachitoka, with Naohiro Ise of **Peace Maker, Working!!** directing and writing the script. Other cast members include Keisuke Ueda, (**Yowamushi Pedal** stage play's Sangaku Manami) as Yukine, Kasumi Hasegawa as Hiyori Iki and Ayaka Ando as Bishamon.

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



INFINITE STRATOS: SERIES 2 COLLECTION

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: KIKUCHI YASUHIITO / SCREENPLAY: FUMIHIKO SHIMO / STARRING: KOKI UCHIYAMA, YOKO HIKASA, YUKANA, ASAMI SHIMODA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Like Strike Witches before it, Infinite Stratos offers a similar take on the mech genre, or rather girls transforming bits of - if not their entire - anatomy into weapons. In this case, it's a product of the Japanese military tinkering with armoured

exoskeletons. The story goes that as women are the only ones capable of piloting an Infinite Stratos (or IS), they lord over the men. But this is a series where the girls are a doleful bunch stuck up in knots over dreary lead Ichika Orimura.

After accidentally touching an IS, Ichika is found to be the only man who can operate it. As such, he's forced to enter into the pilot school with his gagging harem to contend with. Punctured with increasingly questionable situations, there's really nothing you have seen in umpteen other anime.

Based on Izuru Yumizuru's light novel, Infinite Stratos is male fantasy at it's most block-headed. As only an avatar for the viewer, it goes without saying that Ichika lacks any real depth or personality, but even still, he's a sorry state of affairs. As adolescent guff, it isn't half bad, but for anyone older than fourteen or after more depth, there are other options in the mech pool to draw from.

Director Kikuchi Yasuhiro - of Comet Lucifer - brings his usual

pleasant stylings and returns from the first series, popping with much more of the same vibrancy. It might look the business, but the English dub is downright embarrassing. The German is particularly eye-watering, with the English and French a close second and third.

It might skirt around any real direction with stories to peddle figures and hug pillows, and dole out the archetypes with an unequivocally awful sense of humour, but as a step to better things, you could do far better than Infinite Stratos 2.

Extras: Episode 1 broadcast version / Clean opening and closing / Disk credits

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

+++++ 5



GHOST IN THE SHELL ARISE: BORDERS 3 AND 4
BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: KAZUCHIKA KISE / SCREENPLAY: TOW UBUKATA / STARRING: KENICHIROU MATSUDA, MAAYA SAKAMOTO, TARUSUKE SHINGAKI, AI KAYANO / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Being a reimagining of Masamune Shirow's cyberpunk manga and, by extension, Mamoru Oshii's anime adaptation, Ghost in the Shell: Arise had the fiercely loyal fans and the weight of history to contend with. Fortunately for the former, the OVA series has been a success. Told across hour-long episodes known as borders, the series saw how Major Motoko Kusanagi earned her stripes and formed her crack team to fight cyber terrorists in Japan's not too distant future.

In recalibrating the source material some twenty-five years after its publication, the end result has become that much more contemporary, sometimes

uncomfortably so. With its fascination with terrorism, cyber or otherwise, Arise presents a much more pertinent and unsettling reality.

The third border, titled Ghost Tears, offers an unconventional case for the Major, though one that sits comfortably in the franchise. It weaves two stories, which inevitably clash together, where Motoko and Batou try and stop a terrorist organisation, while Togusa plays gumshoe on a murder case. The victim died in possession of a prosthetic leg which belonged to the dubiously-titled Mermaid's Leg corporation. Written down, it's perhaps not the most intriguing of set-ups, but in execution it's

a compelling blend of detective tropes and futurist touchstones.

The following border - Ghost Stands Alone - further teases out the overarching Fire Starter plot with Motoko and the recently minted Public Security Section 9 team, wherein cybernetic brains are being affected by a virus. This entry opts for a more action-heavy approach, with less emphasis on the character development that marked out Ghost Tears. The socio-political undercurrents are complexly intertwined with the showy explosions and gun fights. Then there's its own peculiar brand of weirdness, with the robots an uncanny suggestion of the immediate future.

Motoko, ever one of the most endearing creations of the sci-fi genre, is at her most human in Ghost Tears. That's not to say that she's shed the hardened aspects of her personality that defined her, but she's much more rounded and compelling.

The music is made up of digital drones and beats that have a familiarity in construction but an alien allure in its syncopation. The animation style couples earthly warmth against the cold skyscraped landscape, and seeing the city

lights through the snowfall before the credits roll on the fourth border is magnificent. Despite the considered edifice of each frame, the animation is wavering, playing out as a marked improvement over the first two instalments, but with some of the same inconsistencies coming through.

At under the hour mark, the borders do feel somewhat rushed. Each further the story of the enigmatic Fire Starter, with the details tantalisingly drip-fed, but the main event of each is promptly resolved. However, the four parts co-existing is another essential story in the wider Ghost in the Shell property. The treasure trove of extras only adds to that standing.

With the steady allusions to modern life, it's gone beyond the boundaries of its source material. That isn't to say it has surpassed Shirow's manga thematically or stylistically, but it's shed the cyberpunk parameters for something that can only be termed post-cyberpunk and left at that.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

+++++ 8

COSPLAY CATWALK

A MONTHLY
FOCUS ON
THE COSTUMED
ROLE-PLAY SCENE AT
FAN CONVENTIONS
AROUND THE WORLD

Photo: Alan Chang



Photo: Zara Fox

Zara Fox is known to the cosplay community as SmugBat. We caught up with her to find out more about her and her costumes...

STARBURST: How did you get into cosplay?

Zara Fox: I'd never heard of cosplay until I was eighteen, I was one of those kids who never outgrew dressing up. I've always been creative; I've grown up playing video games and reading books and always had the urge to make costumes of the characters from them, when I did discover cosplay, it was like hitting the jackpot! It wasn't until 2014 that I had the courage to go to my first convention, with a lot of encouragement from my friends. After that, I was hooked!

What is your favourite element of the cosplay community?

The friendships that form from sharing your passion for the characters you cosplay, bonding over learning new

techniques, and how people rally around to help you at a convention if you need it.

What's the greatest challenge facing cosplay now that it's so popular?

Hmmm, honestly I think the spread of elitism is what we now have to overcome. Cosplay becoming more popular is overall a good thing, more people get to enjoy such a creative and fun hobby, but with that growing popularity is also sadly bullying and hierarchy - We need to remember cosplay is overall about fun and enjoying yourself, there should be no place for bringing others down, we should be spreading positivity, not negativity.

What is the most complex thing you've worn?
Sylvanas Windrunner - an undead high



Photo: Robert John Parker

elf/banshee from *World of Warcraft*. It was my first fully armoured cosplay, and the most difficult to get into! First is the three-hour paint job (I have to paint my face, arms, and torso blue) then putting on the armour - I usually have to get somebody to help fasten me into it all, but it's so worth it!

What has been the most fun?

Again, Sylvanas - I'm a huge *World of Warcraft* fan, so dressing up as one of my favourite characters from the game and being in character is so awesome!

Who would you most like to meet, from the world of all things geeky?

Oh, this is tough! I think it's a tie between Kevin Conroy and Mark Hamill - I grew up watching *Batman: TAS* and whenever I read a Batman comic, it's their voices I hear. I'd probably embarrass myself if I met either of them!

What is your next big challenge?

I'm currently working on a *Xena: Warrior Princess* costume. It's a bit of a challenge

as I'm having to learn techniques I've never used before, like sewing a corset, but I love the character so much so I'm determined!

Why SmugBat?

Heh, it started out as an in-joke with me and my friends. When I cosplayed Batwoman, we joked how smug I looked in costume, and somehow I ended up with SmugBat. It stuck, and when I made my page, I spontaneously went with it.

What advice do you have for new cosplayers?

My top advice would be to have fun above all else. Celebrate your fandom *your way*, don't let anyone tell you you're not good enough. Let your creative side out and don't be too scared to learn new things. This time last year I couldn't sew a button, and now I'm working with fabrics, foam, Worbla, latex... you won't know what you can do until you try it!

You can find out more about Zara at [facebook.com/SmugBat-Cosplays](https://www.facebook.com/SmugBat-Cosplays)-1458272761091871/

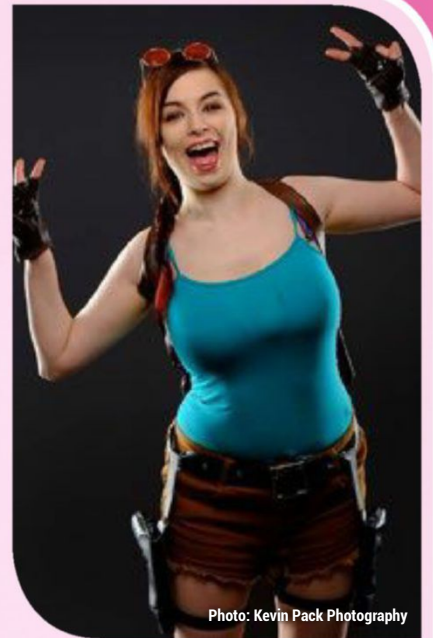


Photo: Kevin Pack Photography

READER'S COSPLAY "QUINN BEE"

We throw the spotlight on another fantastic cosplayer; this month's focus is based in Scotland...

STARBURST: How long have you been cosplaying?

Quinn Bee Cosplay: Although I had dressed up previously, I only really view myself as having started cosplaying from April 2015.

What is your favourite character to dress as?

Harley Quinn, hands down. There's so much fun to be had with the part and

she's the sort of character where pretty much anything goes. She isn't detached like Ivy or Wanda can be and there's so much more liberty afforded in terms of what you can say and do. Although I can't deny there was a lot of fun to be had from playing the good Doctor Quinzel before she became the psychotic clown we all know and love.

How long do you normally spend making the costumes?

I don't have the dexterity to make my costumes. What I do, though, is build the picture of how I want it to look in my mind and spend too many hours to count searching for each component separately. There is a lot of trial and error here, as what looked good in your head doesn't always look good in the flesh.



Photo: Quinn Bee Cosplay



Photo: Quinn Bee Cosplay



Photo: Quinn Bee Cosplay



Photo: Quinn Bee Cosplay

Are you a cosplayer and want to see your work featured in STARBURST?

Drop us an email at cosplay@starburstmagazine.com and we'll print our favourites every month

PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



Platinum Games May be Making New TMNT Game

Those who know their gaming will know that Platinum Games have developed something of a reputation for delivering quality products. **Bayonetta** and **Metal Gear Rising: Revengeance** attest to that and now it looks like the developer is going to be bringing its considerable skillset to the **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** franchise.

A recently discovered classification listing on the Australian Classification Board makes mention of a game called **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles: Mutants in Manhattan**, with the title being attached to Platinum as developer and Activision as publisher. Given Platinum's track record, we may be looking at the beginnings of the greatest Turtles game since the 16-bit era here.

GAME OF THRONES: SEASON TWO Confirmed

Telltale Games has confirmed that they are working on Season Two of their **Game of Thrones** series, which will be great news for those who are a little saddened that the final chapter of Season One is now over and done with.

Unfortunately, the company has not been particularly forthcoming with development details, so we don't know when we can expect to see Season Two arrive. However, it's simply good to know that it is coming at this moment in time. The interview that contained the announcement also included some pretty juicy details on where the games will be heading next, but we'll avoid those for fear of spoiling the first season for anyone who hasn't played yet.

COMING SOON



FAR CRY PRIMAL

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 23RD

The latest in the Far Cry series takes an enormous departure from the last couple of games, putting the player in the role of a hunter in the Mesolithic era. Eschewing the modern setting of the series so far, Primal represents something that we would like to see more of from Triple A games – a genuine risk. Ubisoft could easily have just made another Far Cry in the same vein as 3 and 4, but Primal promises to be a very different beast. Let's just hope it manages to deliver.

COMING SOON



NARUTO SHIPPUDEN: ULTIMATE NINJA STORM 4

PLATFORM: PC, PS4, XBOX ONE
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 5TH

The Naruto games have always been very competent fighters, so it is no surprise that they have built up enough of an audience to justify a PAL release for what is supposed to be the final game in the series. Some big changes have been made to the combat system, which has played a part in the game being delayed until February. However, if said changes offer even more to players we can't see too many people complaining. A must-buy for fans.

More Than 30 Million PS4s Sold

Despite the current generation of games only just starting to catch up to the hardware that hosts them, Sony have still seen the PS4 become a success story in fairly short order.

A recent press release stated that the company has now sold 30 million of the console in just a little over two years, showing that there is still plenty of life in console gaming yet, even with fewer AAA titles than ever before.

Andrew House, President and Global CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc stated: "We are sincerely grateful that gamers across the globe have continued to choose PS4 as the best place to play since launch two years ago."

It really does look like the company is running away with the hardware crown this year, especially as Microsoft are refusing to release their own figures, instead preferring to focus all of their talk on the console itself.

Cloud Comes to SMASH BROS.

In a move that is sure to delight **Final Fantasy** fans, Nintendo has announced that series favourite Cloud Strife is to become the next DLC fighter for the **Super Smash Bros.** games.

We assume that he will fight in much the same way as Ike and Marth, though the video that accompanied the announcement also suggested that he may be able to summon some other characters from **Final Fantasy VII** to help out with the fighting. Either way, it's an interesting move given that the **Final Fantasy VII** remake is inching ever closer to become a reality.

PS2 Emulation to Come to PS4

While Microsoft made a big song and dance about offering Xbox 360 backwards compatibility on the Xbox One, Sony have quietly gone about their business working on emulation that may see us being able to play PS2 games on the PS4 at some point in the near future.

A Sony representative stated: "We are working on utilising PS2 emulation technology to bring PS2 games forward to the current generation. We have nothing further to comment at this point in time."

Details, as ever, are pretty thin on the ground and you have to wonder if backwards compatibility for such an old console is really going to be a selling point compared to the last-gen games offered by the Xbox One backwards compatibility. Perhaps we may see Sony simply offering this service for digital copies of PS2 games that are made available through PSN. Whatever the case, it does look like the company is attempting to play catch up and perhaps not quite succeeding, though we are now eagerly awaiting the announcement of PS3 backwards compatibility as well.

COMING SOON



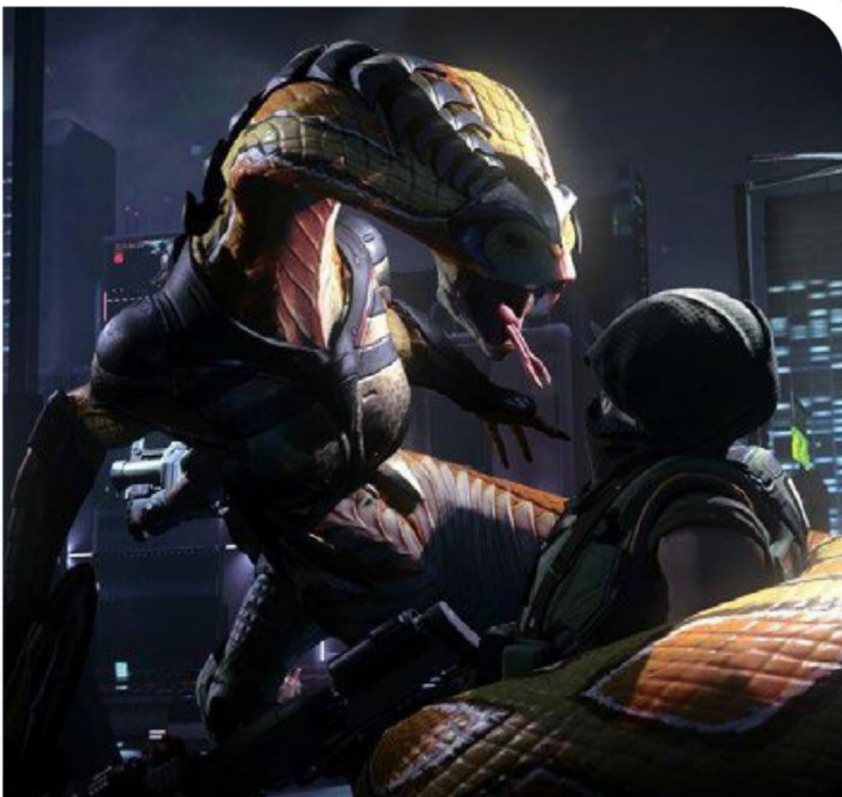
ARSLAN: THE WARRIORS OF LEGEND

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 12TH

Starting life as a novella in the 1980s, The Heroic Legend of Arslan has already been adapted as both a manga and an anime over the years, showing there is plenty of demand in its native Japan. Whether that mirrors the demand in the UK is yet to be seen, but we are sure to find out with this tactical-action game that looks to have some rather stunning cel-shaded graphics, if nothing else.

COMING SOON



XCOM 2

PLATFORM: PC, MAC

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 5TH

Set 20 years after the events of XCOM: Enemy Unknown, the sequel offers you the chance to see what it would be like if humanity had been defeated by the aliens. Taking command of Avenger, which is a new mobile base for the XCOM, the player will be tasked to providing orders to squad members while also arranging for research assignments to be carried out. It all looks remarkably detailed, with individual soldiers being available for recruitment, each with their own skill trees. Look for this to be a real time sink.

DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED Gets Delayed

It is one of the most anticipated titles of 2016, so a lot of gamers are going to be more than a little disappointed to hear that the latest **Deus Ex** game has now been delayed until August 23rd, which is quite the setback from the initial February 23rd release date.

There appears to be good reason for the delay though, as Eidos Montreal made the announcement with the intention of making sure that the game meets the exacting qualities of the fanbase. Eidos Montreal Head of Studio David Anfossi wrote: "We're confident and proud of the game so far. However, as we are now playing through the game in full we can see that it will require more time in post-production for tuning, iterations, and refinement to meet our high standards. We are sorry to disappoint you with this news, and also thank you for all of your support and comments. This game is a huge part of our lives, and we don't want to compromise on its quality."

It's never nice to hear that a game is going to be delayed, particularly one that has so much hype surrounding it, but if it means a better quality product at the end we can't help but approve. Eidos Montreal now have a touch of extra pressure on them to deliver a worthy follow-up to the excellent **Human Revolution**, never mind a game that might be considered as much of a masterpiece as the original title.

Nintendo Releases Galore

Nintendo have been busy not coming up with any original ideas over the course of the month. The company has announced that it will be re-releasing **Pokémon Red, Blue, and Yellow** on the 3DS eShop to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the series. While they will simply be the same titles for a new platform, there are sure to be a few fans willing to pay the asking price.

Furthermore, the company has also announced that it is working on a HD re-release for **Twilight Princess**, which is going to find its way onto the Wii U in March. Of course, it will be released alongside another bloody Amiibo, just in case you felt like having any money at all in your wallet.



FALLOUT 4 Sells Huge

We all knew it was going to be big, but we didn't expect it to be quite this big. Official figures from Bethesda have shown that **Fallout 4** has managed to ship a startling 12 million copies at the time of writing, with a few million more likely to be added to that number by the time you have this magazine in your hands.

That translates to \$750 million in revenue for the company, making it the fastest-selling Bethesda title ever made. It also managed to smash the Steam record for most concurrent players, topping the previous record set by **Grand Theft Auto V**, and the Pip-Boy Companion App has become the most downloaded app on the iTunes store. Just to put a little icing on the cake, Twitch has also announced that it is the most viewed launch game of all time as well.

Vlatko Andonov, President of Bethesda Softworks, commented: "We're extremely proud of Todd Howard, Game Director at Bethesda Game Studios, and his experienced team of developers for their talent and dedication in creating this extraordinary game. **Fallout 4** is a masterpiece in game development and storytelling, providing fans hundreds of hours of fun as they explore and are challenged by this fascinating, beautifully crafted world."

Barring the marketing spiel at the end, it's hard to deny the sentiments of the statement. The game, by the way, is absolutely excellent, even if a few beloved mechanics have been streamlined. If you don't have it yet, there is really little excuse to not add it to your collection. After all, how many other games can claim to have caused a 10% drop in traffic for Pornhub?

COMING SOON



STREET FIGHTER V

PLATFORM: PC, PS4

RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 16TH

Xbox One gamers are going to be missing out on the latest instalment in this legendary fighting series, at least for the time being. Everybody else will get the chance to head back into one of Capcom's most revered gaming series. Anticipation is high thanks to the superb quality of **Street Fighter IV**, so fans will be looking for more of the same with number five. Look for a host of new characters to be introduced, in addition to some fan favourites from previous games that haven't been seen for years.

COMING SOON



PLANTS VS ZOMBIES: GARDEN WARFARE 2

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC
RELEASE DATE: FEBRUARY 25TH

After having been defeated by technologically advanced zombies, the plants are now fighting back to reclaim their home. That's about the extent of the story you'll be getting from Popcap's latest effort, which revisits the popular franchise and gives it a nice touch of paint. Unlike many other EA-published games, the title will not require you to be online in order to play and, most shockingly of all, new content will be provided free of charge.

SUPER STAR WARS Comes to PS4 and Vita

While everybody is getting excited about **Star Wars: Battlefront**, and rightly so even if the game has 'only' managed to achieve the fourth biggest launch of the year, retro enthusiasts will be much happier to hear that the classic **Super Star Wars** has been ported to the PS4 and Vita.

The SNES Super Star Wars games are underappreciated gems that definitely deserve a play. Be wary though, because they are as hard as nails so you can't go into the experience expecting to be able to blast your way through in a couple of hours. Still, for those who are tired of the constant shooty-shooty of **Battlefront** but still want a little more **Star Wars** in their life, we can think of few better games to get started with.

Activision Buys CANDY CRUSH SAGA Developer

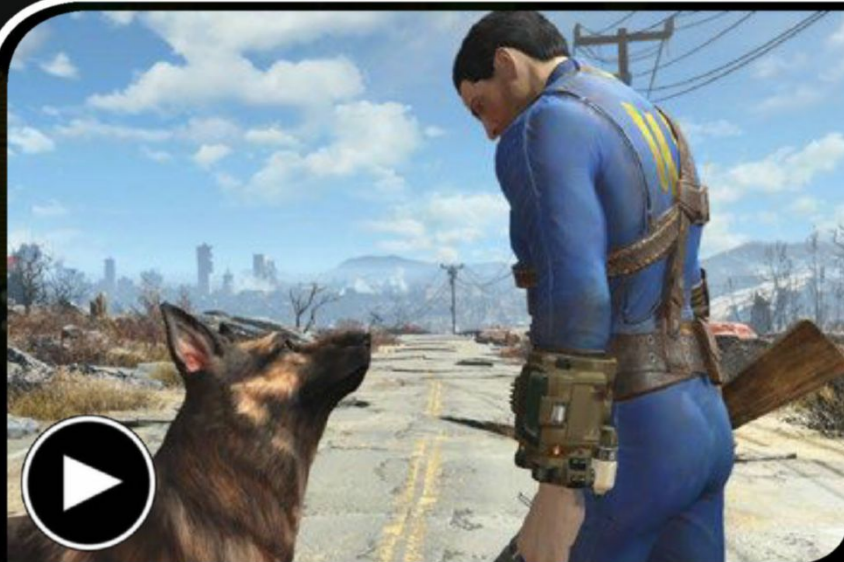
Why do we live in a world where the developers of a pile of dross like **Candy Crush Saga** can be sold for \$5.9 billion? That's the amount that Activision (who else... except maybe EA) have paid to get their hands on King, who made the time-consuming and utterly pointless game.

Of course, it's not the development skills that are a priority here, but rather the fact that King's titles are played by 500 million people every month, offering plenty of opportunity for Activision to extract money from people who aren't really sure what a proper game is yet.

While the purchase hasn't been finalised just yet, this looks to be a money spinner for Activision and yet another excuse for them to not produce anything that is even halfway original or interesting ever again.

THE LATEST
GAMING RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



FALLOUT 4

DEVELOPER: BETHESDA GAME STUDIOS / PUBLISHER: BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / PLATFORM: PC, XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The experience by now is an iconic one. An armoured vault door noisily grinds to one side as sunlight spills within the metal tomb for the first time in centuries. A lone scavenger sets out to accomplish their quest and we are told that, ultimately, war will never change.

Serving as more of a successor to Fallout 3 than New Vegas, Fallout 4 is traditional in every sense of the word. It sticks to what worked best, never truly trying to push into unfamiliar territories or beyond what's worked before. However, what helps it avoid the rut Assassin's Creed has slowly sunk into is its willingness to tweak with old ideas. As such, when you're stalking through the bleak, beautiful ruins of the old world, you're likely to notice more than a few differences this time around.

Running off of the same engine as past outings, the core difference here stems from its visual presentation. Not so much the graphics themselves, as many rough textures will no doubt infuriate modders for years to come, but how the world flows about you. Weather can dynamically shift in moments, turning from a bright summer's day to a raging irradiated storm seemingly without warning, and many NPCs refuse to stay in one place. Outside of sparse settlements, you can stumble upon the same ramshackle multiple times, only to find anything from a trader to a grinning band of super mutants awaiting your visit. Save for the odd spawn point, the world

seems truly unchanging, save for the forgotten ruins of old.

As with any Bethesda open world game, its true strength stems from the attention to detail and the vast immersive landscape. This is something they utterly nail, and everything from the brief look into the pre-war world to the derelict scrap-metal structures of Diamond City has a history. Even without delving into the vast library of text documents and terminals, the very placement of certain items in old ruins helps to tell their own story. These can range from simple additions such as corpses in the street noting a battle, to a hippy slogan-spewing robot hanging out in an abandoned warehouse. Suffice to say, there's no shortage of surprises to be found within the Commonwealth wasteland.

Of course, more so than crumbling ruins and skeletal remains, it's your foes which help make this world feel truly alive. Well, that and how often they reduce you to bloody giblets in a moment's notice. For all its ghoulish beauty, the world here is nevertheless a vastly more deadly one, with many old foes undergoing substantial upgrades. Rather than the fodder from before, feral ghouls make for bullet resistant ambush predators who can quickly fell unsuspecting travellers, and even small bands of raiders can quickly put your head on a spike. This is helped as much by a visual overhaul and substantial damage buffs as it is by a serious upgrade to their

animations. No longer glued in place, ghouls will hurl themselves at you, bloatflies will weave about in the air, and you can often be pinned in place by larger foes as they attempt to crack open your cranium. There's no moment when you truly feel safe and, unlike before, it's rare to run into a threat you can't take seriously.

Combat itself, while sadly still more than a little janky, has been substantially improved. Closer in many respects to Far Cry 3 than Fallout 3, you're more reliant upon running and gunning to stay alive, and VATS is no longer an easy answer to all your problems. Along with no longer freezing the flow of battle, merely slowing it, it's harder to get off nearly as many shots as before. As such, you're left relying more upon your skills than whatever stats you have been grinding out.

Sadly, for all its immersion, things start to break down once you look into the story. Players of Fallout 3 will quickly start to have an acute sense of déjà vu as they progress, with many story elements, ideas and even characters being recycled as time goes by. It becomes so bad that the final mission becomes little more than a rehash of charging into Project Purity. This might have been forgiven to some degree, but even beyond the main quest there are more than a few issues. While a voiced protagonist might have helped improve the visual presentation, it rapidly erases any sense of immersion when interacting with NPCs. Why? Because once they're given voice, it can seem as if you're simply following someone else's story rather than making your own. This might have worked for the Witcher's Geralt, but he at least had a vast established history to work with. Here it just seems as if someone else's plan is hijacking your game.

As a final note, both console and PC versions are another sad victim of the Bethesda curse of poor optimisation and buggy environments. The most frustrating of these is the game's habit of chugging during intense combat, with some astounding drops in frame rate. Combined with issues such as NPCs getting stuck in walls and conversations failing to end, it's clear little has been done to patch up old technical failings.

Still, for all its glaring flaws it's hard not to recommend this one. With an enthralling world, vastly improved combat and a great new spin on older elements, it's more than worth stomaching the bad for the best the game can offer.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★ 8



JUST CAUSE 3

DEVELOPER: AVALANCHE STUDIOS / PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX /
PLATFORM: PC, XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Just Cause is a franchise which instantly brings to mind images of anarchy, destruction and hijacking planes mid-flight. Few ongoing series embraced the sheer wanton destruction it offered, and its third instalment offers more of the same. If you're after free roaming ludicrous destruction, this is a solid choice, but be warned this third instalment has picked up a few bad habits from modern gaming.

The story is as simple as you would expect. Set several years after the second game,

Rico returns to his homeland only to find it under the iron grip of a despotic governor. Explosions ensue. In fairness, while simple, the plot proves to be cheesily engaging thanks to its characters and the new opportunities it offers to blow things up. Strongholds lined with explosive barrels are always a joy to annihilate, and Avalanche have put significant time into a few new toys. Along with the return of the hookshot (which can be used to tether and drag objects/vehicles/enemy soldiers together

at breakneck speed), Rico is equipped with a wingsuit and jet-propelled magnetic devices which can turn nearby junk into land-bound rockets.

The world itself, while a little samey, is utterly beautiful and with the sheer variety of vehicles you can steal, you're unlikely to get bored of it for the first few hundred hours. What's more is that the gunplay proves to be thoroughly engaging, if a little reliant upon locking onto targets, and is well suited to running and running between points of cover. With the PC port offering no end of settings menus, this is extremely friendly to high and low end machines alike, but it's also here that you might start to notice a few problems. While bugs are a common occurrence in open world games, a few frustratingly common ones plague this PC port and hinder your progress. In particular, certain vehicles have the notorious habit of arriving on fire and promptly exploding, making one of the key mechanics of the game unreliable at the best of times.

Worse still, the Ubisoft inspired open world trope is in full force here short of the radio towers. This turns many

side-missions into unengaging fetch quests or one man races, bloating the game with unwanted upgrade grinding. This might have been fine were it not for the fact that half the weapons upgrades are locked away behind these missions, forcing you to play them out in order to reach the genuinely fun moments.

Just Cause 3 is fun but very flawed and your enjoyment will heavily depend upon how much needless busywork you can stomach. It's still worth a look, but it's not the smash hit many were hoping for.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★ 7



STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT

DEVELOPER: EA DIGITAL ILLUSIONS CE / PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS /
PLATFORM: PC, XBOX ONE, PS4 / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Some games are driven almost purely on fan-service, and this is undoubtedly one of them. Everything from fighting on Hoth to hearing the occasional Wilhelm scream has been crafted to entice nostalgic memories of the first Star Wars trilogy. This is hardly a bad thing of course, but what DICE seems to have forgotten is that you need real mechanical substance beneath that, something which Battlefront is sorely lacking.

In truth, this is less a Battlefront game than it is a mediocre Battlefield game with blasters. It looks the part

to be sure, with every X-wing, AT-AT and lightsaber restored to its pristine glory. Yet the moment you play it, you're left with the same old Battlefield formula but bereft of its usual strengths. Along with an extremely limited arsenal of guns, the blasters boil down to little more than recoilless hoses spitting red light. Rather than retaining any sense of power, there's a sheer lack of any kick or satisfying impact as you nail an enemy soldier, and each gun feels extremely samey. It's shamelessly arcade, but whereas this game's

predecessors embraced that element, here it's torn between trying to retain old ideas while embracing modern military shooter trends. The end result just means you're left with a bland FPS suffering from an identity crisis.

Things aren't helped by a few issues which have plagued the game since its beta, notably a problematic balance of power on each map. Hoth is incredibly biased towards the Imperials while Endor is a cakewalk for the Rebels, and there is very little middle ground found between them. No matter the map, each one seems to always be weighted in favour of one side, and a big part of that comes down to its focus upon individual kills rather than scoring point for your whole force. After all, when one side has AT-ATs and a bigger army, a K/D ratio seems more than a little arbitrary.

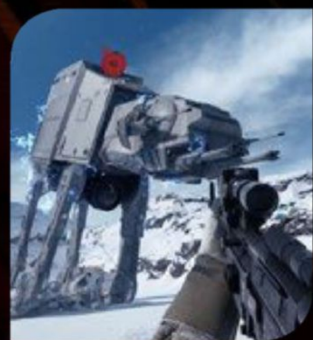
Of the game's many modes, only Walker Assault really stands out, with its objective-driven gameplay leading to tense, frantic battles which showcase Battlefront's best elements. By comparison, Drop Zone merely repeats Walker Assault's core elements but

lacks the same impact, while Hero Hunt and Fighter Squadron are all too brief experiences which feel more like demos for future DLC than a mode in their own right.

Despite all of this, Battlefront isn't a bad game but it's so mired in generic Battlefield clichés and mediocrity that it simply doesn't live up to the series' legacy. Much like the prequel trilogy, it's pretty to look at and has a few moments which are sure to satisfy old fans, but it doesn't take long for bland dissatisfaction to set in. Save this one for the sales, folks.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★ 5



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RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



RETRO YEAR IN REVIEW - 1995

What an eventful year 1995 was! The 16-bit era was still going strong, with many major titles being released for the SNES and Mega Drive, but it was the beginning of the end for Nintendo's 8-bit adventures as the classic Nintendo Entertainment System was discontinued in North America and Europe after ten years of service. The NES would survive in Japan until 2003, with repairs being undertaken by Nintendo until as late as 2007, taking its overall lifespan to a more than respectable twenty-two years. This pales in comparison to Sega's 8-bit Master System though, which unbelievably is still going strong in certain parts of the world today!

Back to 1995, though, and the biggest news came in the form of brand new hardware, with both Sega and Sony making their futuristic next-gen systems available to a highly excited gaming audience. Marking possibly the largest leap in hardware capabilities between any two console generations, the differences between current and next-gen systems were astounding at the time. Pixels were traded in for polygons, 2D became 3D, and bleepy chiptune music and digitised voices were replaced by full CD-quality speech and soundtracks. Further advancements have been made with each generation of hardware since then, of course,

but none have been quite as mind-blowing to live through as the jump from cartridge-based games to full CD-ROM functionality.

Both Sega and Sony had released their new hardware (the Saturn and PlayStation respectively) in Japan to rave reviews at the end of 1994. Anticipation amongst western gamers was at an all-time high, as gamers waited patiently for news of worldwide release dates. Sega had a huge surprise in store for attendees at the inaugural Electronic Entertainment Expo in May 1995 - they had already shipped a vast amount of Saturns to various retailers across the USA, and it was to be made available to the public at a cost of \$399 immediately following the press conference. Not wanting to be outdone by this, Sony used their time at E3 to announce their forthcoming PlayStation console would be sold for \$100 less than the Saturn upon its release in September that year.

The somewhat rushed release of the Saturn infuriated some retailers who had been left out of the initial supply chain, and led to further problems down the line with developers being unable to get their games ready for release in such a short time scale. Only six games were available for the Saturn at the time of its official US release, and the software catalogue wouldn't reach double

figures until several months down the line.

Platformers *Clockwork Knight* and *Bug!* were both pretty good games, but they were so cute and colourful that they failed to capture the attention of older western gamers at the time. Arcade racer *Daytona USA* was seen to be massively inferior to the original arcade version, and despite a massive marketing campaign *Virtua Fighter* was never as popular in the West as it had been in its native Japan. Nobody was going to be up for buying a \$400 console to play *Worldwide Soccer* (even if it had the rather grand subtitle of *Sega International Victory Goal Edition*), meaning it was left to 3D dragon-riding shoot-'em-up *Panzer Dragoon* to pique some interest. Out of all six launch titles, only three (*Clockwork Knight*, *Daytona USA* and *Virtua Fighter*) were available upon the Saturn's European release a couple of months later.

With the Saturn underwhelming gamers across the world, Sony's patience paid off as the September launch of the original PlayStation afforded plenty of time to concentrate on marketing and, more importantly, putting together a portfolio of must-have system-selling games. Highlights of the ten-title launch line-up included weapons-based beat-'em-up *Battle Arena Toshinden*, which was pushed as a more extreme version of *Virtua Fighter*, while the original *Rayman* was seen to



do cute and cuddly much better than any of Sega's offerings. *Ridge Racer* was a faster alternative to *Daytona USA*, *Rapid Reload* offered plenty of entertainment to fans of run-and-gunners, and *Wipeout* did futuristic racing better than anyone since *F-Zero* on the SNES.

If there was ever a prime example of how a console's launch can affect its lifespan, this has got to be it. The PlayStation had outsold the Saturn just days after its launch, and quickly reached a point where Sega had no hope of catching up. The Saturn did see an increase in sales after the announcement of a price cut just before Christmas 1995, but Sony were so far ahead by then that the numbers battle had pretty much already been won. It wasn't all doom and gloom for Sega though, as the Saturn went on to receive many fine titles over the next couple of years, until it was discontinued in 1998 and replaced by the Dreamcast.

And what were Nintendo up to while all this was going on? After photos of their Ultra 64 console had been revealed to gaming press in late 1994, hopes had been high for a full-scale announcement at E3. The higher-ups at Nintendo had other ideas, though, having decided that their new machine wasn't quite ready to be unveiled to the public. Instead, they concentrated on pushing their upcoming Virtual Boy system, basically a big red box on a portable tripod which was capable of displaying 3D graphics and causing migraines and neck and back pain. With its strange monochromatic black and red graphics and countless reports of physical discomfort experienced by users, the Virtual Boy was discontinued after less than twelve months on general sale. The Ultra 64 would go on to be re-named the Nintendo 64, and was finally shown to the public at a Japanese games expo in November 1995 before being released worldwide between June '96 and December 1997.

Elsewhere, 1995 still had plenty of excitement in store for gamers who



hadn't yet upgraded to any of the next-gen consoles. The Super Nintendo had a particularly strong year, seeing the release of many highly acclaimed and fondly remembered titles such as *Super Mario World 2: Yoshi's Island*, *Chrono Trigger*, *Earthbound*, *Secret of Evermore*, and *Donkey Kong Country 2*. It wasn't all fun and games though, as education was also on the menu in the form of *Bronkie the Bronchiasaurus* and *Packy and Marlon*, which sought to teach children about the dangers of asthma and diabetes.

Mega Drive owners were treated to the fourth instalment in the long-running *Phantasy Star* series, which received a mixed reaction at the time due to its underwhelming graphics. We all know that the story is often the main selling point with any RPG though, and *Phantasy Star IV* didn't disappoint in this area, being full of unpredictable twists and turns that kept gamers guessing right until the end. *Ristar* sought to emulate the success of *Sonic the Hedgehog* by filling its levels with colourful graphics and enemies, almost to the point where at first glance you'd be forgiven for thinking that you were looking at a shinier version of the original *Sonic* title. The gameplay was much slower than *Sonic* though, and borrowed several elements from other games including the 'grab' mechanic from *Retro Bytes* favourite



McDonald's Treasure Land Adventure (possibly better known from its use in *Dynamite Headdy*, but any excuse to big up *Treasure Land Adventure* should be seized with both hands!). A solid, if slightly derivative pleasure! *Earthworm Jim 2* was another cheerful 1995 release, developed with the Mega Drive in mind before being ported over to the Super Nintendo. Gothic platformer *Gargoyles*, based on the animated TV series of the same name, opted for a darker tone, filled with beautifully drawn mythological characters, pits of fire and crumbling castles full of foreboding.

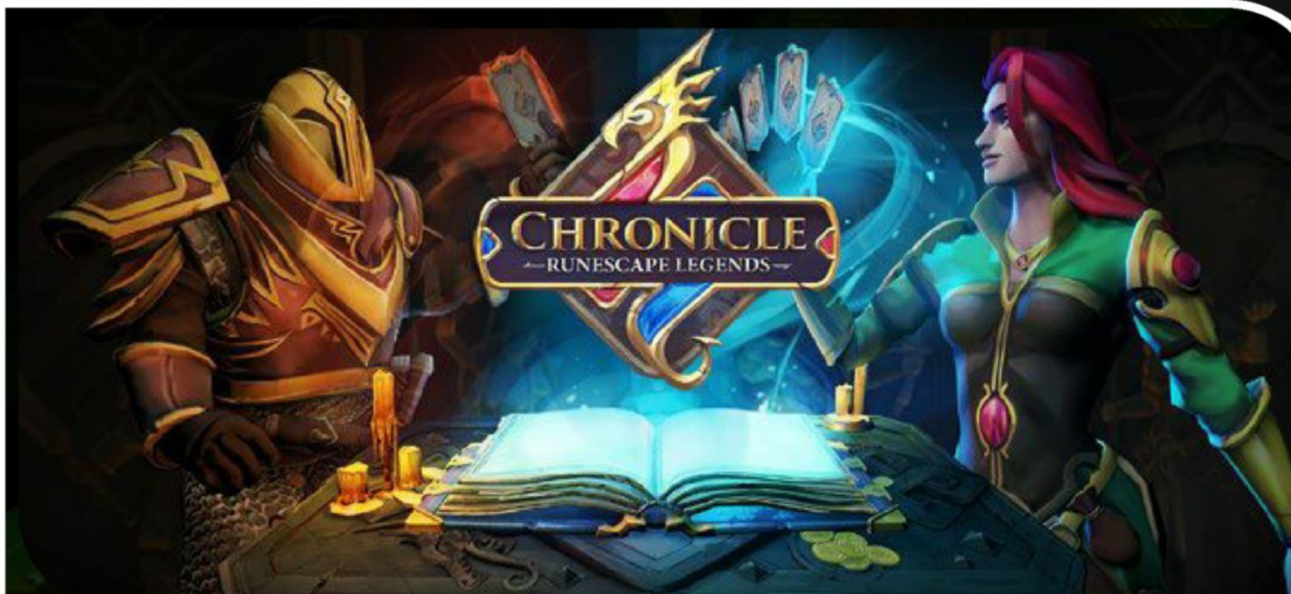
Away from the 'big two' consoles, *Fatal Fury 3*, *King Of Fighters '95*, and a new version of *Double Dragon* (based on the 1994 movie of the same name, which in turn had been based on the previous games in the series) all put in appearances on the Neo Geo. Adding plenty of innovative features to expand on previous titles in their respective series, these three games still stand up as some of the finest the Neo Geo had to offer. Over in the arcades, 1995's big news was the release of *Mortal Kombat 3*. New gameplay features such as attack combos and a run button were added, as well as the inclusion of all-new finishing moves known as 'Animalities' which saw opponents being brutally torn to pieces by a variety of wild animals. These additions weren't enough for some, though, with many fans mourning the loss of several familiar characters such as Scorpion, Baraka, Reptile, and Mileena. Having become firm favourites earlier in the series, the disappointment at their omission from MK3 was so great that developers Midway decided to update the game in late '95, with *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* reinstating a handful of characters as well as adding a few extra new playable fighters and boss characters to appease long-term fans of the series. We'd be foolish not to throw in a quick mention of the *Mortal Kombat* movie here, released in summer 1995 to wildly inconsistent reviews. It may have contained some extremely dodgy acting and little to no plot, but the fight scenes were awesome and it still holds up as a decent enough watch today. And at least it was better than the *Street Fighter* movie...

Of course, this is nowhere near a complete list of everything that happened in the gaming world in 1995, but we hope you'll agree it's been pretty interesting to look back at some of the highlights. We'll see you again here at the back of the mag next month!



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
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REALM OF
TABLETOP GAMING



We are a sucker for a good quality card game at the STARBURST Secret Thunderdome, and we've waxed lyrical about Living Card Games such as Fantasy Flight's *Game of Thrones* and Collectible Card Games like *Magic The Gathering* in the past. Recently, a new type of card game has entered the market; online card games. All the joy of table top gaming, but without having to clear all the space. Jagex gave us a preview of their entry into this new genre, and it's rather exciting.

Chronicle: RuneScape Legends is a collectable card game based on the RuneScape world. RuneScape is an intricately designed Massively Multiplayer Online Roleplaying Game. The RuneScape setting has its own unique heroes,

monsters, and legends and these have provided the bulk of the inspiration for their online card game. Though, of course, no prior knowledge is needed. Although the setting may be familiar to some, the game itself is something rather new and different.

The game starts with a familiar set-up. Players take the role of a legendary hero (each of whom have their own advantages and playstyle), and then build a 'deck' of cards. These cards can provide combat bonuses or equipment, trigger trouble for your foe or even give your hero a fight that, if he's successful, will give loads of useful extras.

The deck is played not against your opponent, but yourself. Essentially, the cards make up the elements of an

adventure your hero goes on. At the same time, your opponent goes on a similar journey. Once the cards are chosen and the adventure begins, the players get to watch their hero race against their foe. This means you have no idea what cards your opponent is going to use until the game begins, allowing for different play styles. Are you the sort of person who saves lots of gold to purchase that one big super weapon, or will you constantly snipe your enemy in order to get an advantage? It's only at the end of the game that your character gets to take on the foe. If you get it right and pick the right strategy, you'll be able to soundly beat your opponent.

In addition to this novel approach, *Chronicle: RuneScape Legends* also eschews the more traditional 'table top' feel of these games for an animated gaming board. Each of the cards convert into an elaborate graphic and it really feels like each three dimensional model is a stand-in for an actual gaming figurine.

Chronicle: RuneScape Legends is still in Beta at the moment; we played a game under development, with everything set to the most basic levels. The results, even at this early stage, were impressive and highly engaging. The people behind RuneScape are creating a good looking, easy to play game, with original ideas and addictive content. We're looking forward to seeing where this goes. +

Ed Fortune can be tweeted at @ed_fortune and contacted via ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com





We caught up with Mark Killey, the senior producer of *Chronicle: RuneScape Legends*, to find out more about the game...

STARBURST: Why did you develop a card game?

Mark Killey: We actually started out by making a variety of different game prototypes based on RuneScape, some of which were focused on questing and the idea of a game where you created adventures that could be automatically played out. For one of those prototypes we tried using cards as a delivery method for the quests and that's how *Chronicle: RuneScape Legends* was born. We then proved the concept with a physical card game before making a digital version.

How is it different from *Magic: The Gathering* and *Hearthstone*?

At its core, *Chronicle* has a unique mechanic that we've not seen in a card game before. Players fight up to four of their own cards at a time across five chapters in a magical chronicle, which resembles a pop-up book of sorts. The game behaves more like an RPG where the cards have drops or associated costs. The unknown element is provided by the actions of your opponent, as they might play cards that trigger effects that directly impact yourself, such as stealing gold or modifying some of your cards' stats. The game is built around sophisticated card synergies, but your opponent's actions layer a level of risk/reward on top of that because whatever you have planned could be interrupted by your opponent, ruining all your best laid tactics.

The competitive side is handled in a novel and clever way. Why this approach?

We only wanted to make a card game if we could do something new with the genre. Focusing on what we feel is an innovative, new core mechanic for a strategy card game gives us the best chance to stand out from the crowd.

How will the playable characters expand as the game develops?

We've already revealed our next two characters (or 'Legends'), a vampire and

slayer master, and our goal is to add new Legends and maps on a regular basis that will be thematically linked. Each will have a particular play style and lots of specific cards related to those mechanics. We feel that we've only really scratched the surface of what can be achieved with the game's core systems.

You really get a feel for the different play styles of the heroes. What was the biggest challenge in making this happen?

Balance! Balancing a game like *Chronicle* is a massive challenge. The Legends all have the same base stats so their variety comes from their custom cards and these tend to have multiple associated values. When you then factor in the way that the card synergies occur within *Chronicle*, everything gets very complicated. We have been playing the game in our studio now for a number of months, and whenever we thought the game's balance was settling down, a new deck style would emerge that exploited specific card synergies in unexpected ways. This is going to keep happening in the closed beta too and is something we're looking forward to working with the community on.

How will the booster decks work?

Booster decks can be purchased with the game's soft currency system or (if you're really lucky) as a reward for winning a match. There are five cards in each booster pack, split between those that are character specific and those that can be used by anyone. *Chronicle* also has a sophisticated crafting system, in which cards can be dissolved into precious gems that are representative of their rarity level. The different types of gems can also be exchanged with each other to help you craft the cards you want.

What's to stop players with the most cash getting the best advantages?

Chronicle is an extremely tactical and psychological game. Having the best cards is no guarantee of victory if your opponent outwits you. From my own experience, since launch I've lost many a game to new players with the basic decks, despite having custom decks myself, purely because they outsmarted me!

RuneScape has always had the crunchiest and most entertaining rules systems. How is this reflected in *Chronicle*?

We feel that RuneScape is, at its core, quite a cerebral game that requires a good degree of planning and strategy from a player in order to get the most out of it. *Chronicle* is hewn from the same stone and requires a similarly thoughtful approach before you are able to master it.

The character models look lovely. Will we ever get physical versions of these pieces?

Funny you ask that - we had a 3D model of one of the characters printed as an experiment. It's certainly something we'd look into if there was demand from the players.

Will this new game expand the ongoing story? What should we expect to see next?

The two games do not share anything in a narrative sense, but they both obviously contribute to the broader RuneScape family of games.

ED FORTUNE

To find out more about *CHRONICLE: RUNESCAPE LEGENDS* or to register for the beta, go to www.rschronicle.com



WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM
AROUND THE WEB
THIS MONTH WITH
JACK BOTTOMLEY



THE FESTIVITY IS OUT THERE AND IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY

Star Wars: The Force Awakens is in cinemas NOW! So chances are if you are sat reading this you have either: seen it, are waiting to see it or are in the gap between seeing it. Also, depending on what day it is, Christmas is here/just finished! Whatever the case, let's all get into a festive mood with two pieces of clothing that fit the occasion (see what we did there?). Now, all of you will be familiar with those Christmas jumpers that unfathomably come into fashion all of a sudden as the December holiday arrives! Well if you have ever thought that those jumpers could do with less reindeer and more AT-ATs or TV references then here are the tops for you.

The first, available from 8ball.co.uk, is actually a T-shirt in the style of said Christmas jumpers and proudly displays some great looking 'Snow Walker' designs! The second, from the folks at grindstore.com, is a proper belting Christmas sweater, which uses iconic **Star Wars** character/vehicle silhouettes to create a Christmas tree. The design is just impressive... most impressive. However, if you are a sci-fi fan who prefers to experience the activity on this planet, then the gear is out there. In fact, as this issue celebrates the oncoming return of Mulder & Scully in the new **The X-Files** miniseries in January (see our *X-Files* feature on page 12), why not incorporate that into this Emporium Christmassy section. Christmas involves quite a bit of belief and one clever person at **Etsy** has picked up on that with this **X-Files** influenced 'I Want to Believe' Christmas top, which has a design of Santa and his sleigh on the front. Santa is out there!

KNITTED JUMPER STYLE T SHIRT - SNOW WALKERS - £13.99 - AVAILABLE FROM [8BALL.CO.UK](http://8ball.co.uk)

STAR WARS CHARACTER TREE RED CHRISTMAS SWEATER- £29.99 - AVAILABLE FROM [GRINDSTORE.COM](http://grindstore.com)

I WANT TO BELIEVE X-FILES CHRISTMAS SHIRT- £14.98 - AVAILABLE FROM [ETSY.COM](http://etsy.com)



THE MERCH AWAKENS

Did we mention that **The Force Awakens** was out now? No? Thought not. Well **Star Wars: The Force Awakens** is in cinemas right now! And not only do we know that because we have seen it, written about it, watched the adverts, seen the posters and viewed the trailers, but we know that because we have walked into a shop and seen the shelves. There has been an awakening on those very shelves, yes indeed the **Star Wars** gear is here and the Force is with it. So here are a few items that caught our eye. The first is this neat **Star Wars**-y spin on the age-old lava lamp from **Argos** that replaces the undefined luminescent blobs with glowing X-wings and TIE Fighters!

Then in the slightly higher priced areas of the Mos Eisley interactive market is the Kylo Ren Black Series Helmet available from theForbiddenPlanet.co.uk. The helmet is true to the shady antagonist's look in the movie and also has a voice alteration capability to ensure that you get that Ren look (and sound) just right. However, if you have deep pockets and an embrace of new technologies, you will likely be most drawn to the pricy but cool interactive BB-8 robotic droid by Sphero. Operated by your tablet or smart phone, this little droid is authentic to the metal co-star of the new film, responds to your voice and has a unique independence! Plus you can record and view holographic videos; that almost makes this innovative toy from disneyStore.co.uk as cool as the real BB-8... almost!

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STARBURST



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If you recall in issue # 416, we featured Gods and Monsters' wonderful Lucio Fulci Poker Cards, which are still available in limited quantities if you're quick (at a special price!), and now they have unleashed the third set of Lurid Trumps – a fun twist on the classic card game that highlights the glory (or gory) days of the Video Nasty. Series 3: The Graham Bright Edition covers the Section 3 titles of the DPP's infamous list of films that were considered bad enough to be taken to Magistrates' Courts, but unlikely to proceed to convictions for obscenities in the High Court. The first two editions sold out and now command high prices on auction sites, so snap these up while you have the chance!

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STARBURST: EVENT PROFILE



WORDS: ED FORTUNE
PHOTOS: ANNE DAVIES

Sledge-Lit described itself as **Edge-Lit's** winter vacation; an attempt to run an event that is as engaging and as strong as **Edge-Lit**, with the added advantage of being a good opportunity for bibliophiles to get some Christmas shopping in, whilst still being a high quality literature festival for genre junkies.

Earlier this year, bespoke genre book festival **Edge-Lit** hit record numbers in attendance and everyone involved in the UK genre book world agreed that it was definitely the place to be. Some noted that it lacked the cosiness of past events, however.

Everything that we've come to expect from **Edge-Lit** was available at this chillier sequel. Fans of science fiction, fantasy, and horror fiction were well served here with panels, discussions, workshops, readings, and book launches. **Edge-Lit** has fast become a go-to venue for publishers looking to launch new products and get new authors used to the scene. **Sledge-Lit** followed this tradition by officially launching Andrew David Barker's excellent **Evil Dead** tribute, **Dead Leaves**. Spectral Books also launched two books: Simon Marshall-Jones's **Biblia Longcrofta** and the **Spectral Book of Horror Stories 2**, just in time for mid-winter.



Horror writers were further served by guest of honour Charles Stross, who treated the fans to a reading from one of his forthcoming novels from his series **The Laundry Files**. Stross did say that though he's enjoying creating the award-winning spy versus supernatural series, fans should expect to see more science fiction from him soon. We can't wait.

Critically acclaimed satirist and novelist Adam Roberts was also on hand with his unique sense of style to charm book lovers with readings and general insight. Roberts alone was worth the journey; his understanding of the world of genre is incomparable. Alison Moore was keeping up the side for those of us who can't tell the difference between proper literature and genre books (because there isn't one) and was mesmerising and witty throughout. Scriptwriter Robert Shearman also provided his unique view on the industry, and was particularly interesting on the Small and Indy Press panel.

The venue itself, the Derby Quad, has multiple levels and many small rooms suitable for workshops and trader stalls. By now, the event's volunteers know the venue like the back of their hand and can happily and easily redirect lost book lovers to the place they need to be. The



workshops themselves show a steady (and strong) improvement from previous **Edge-Lit** events. The bulk of the focus this time round was for those looking to get published. The talks included how to find an agent (and common pitfalls in that process) as well as how to fine-tune crucial elements of your work.

Successful events and conventions tend to enjoy a rather odd phenomenon. The initial shock of a new and exciting thing tends to lead people to go and tell their friends. This, in turn, leads to more people going to the next event, and so on. Those who enjoyed the original event begin to notice that popularity has changed things, and in some cases, start to comment that it's not as good as it once was. What **Sledge-Lit** did was capture the intimate vibe of earlier **Edge-Lit** events, but also reap the benefits of experience. In short, it possessed the professionalism of a seasoned event, whilst still having that refreshing vibe of something new.

Overall, **Sledge-Lit** was a worthy attempt to expand the **Edge-Lit** brand. It seems likely that we'll see it again next year, and we suspect that the bulk of the genre literature industry will want to go to the summer event; it's much easier to hang out in the bar's balcony and talk to authors when the weather is warmer. However, **Sledge-Lit** looks set to fill a much-needed niche – an event for those who want their book fandoms a little cosier and perhaps a little more focused on the darker things during the darker months of the year. We cannot wait to go next year. ✦





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*GUESTS SUBJECT TO CHANGE



Oh we do like to geek beside the seaside!

PAUL MOUNT'S



This month, we meet JESSICA JONES, Marvel's latest TV superhero, join forces with ASH VS. EVIL DEAD and curse the cowardice of THE WALKING DEAD...

As a certified old fogey and a child of the 1960s - the Golden Age of Television - it's taken me a little while to get my head around this new-fangled notion of original content arriving not on good old-fashioned broadcast television but on streaming services like Netflix and Amazon. I don't necessarily follow the popular view that Netflix and co. are 'the future of television' - I think (and certainly hope that there'll always be a place in the world for a curated television schedule - but there's certainly much to be said for a current production model which is gifting us some bloody good shows we're not going to see anytime soon on traditional networks.

Jessica Jones, for example. I must make two things quite clear: I'd never heard of Jessica Jones or her Alias comic strip series before Marvel/Netflix announced their raft of TV superhero series last year and, because binge-watching is something only other people seem to have the time for (I know, I know, I'm a TV critic!) I'm still working my way through the thirteen episodes of *Jessica Jones* that arrived like manna from TV Heaven in one great clump on November 20th. I'm a good eight or nine episodes in - this really is TV to savour not swallow down in a rush, to be honest - and, like Netflix's *Daredevil* earlier this year, it's seriously good stuff. *Seriously*, seriously good. Krysten Ritter (best known for her role as Jesse Pinkman's doomed junkie girlfriend in *Breaking Bad* - now that I did binge-watch) plays the titular no-nonsense, streetwise Jessica, gifted with extraordinary abilities (which she's never showy about) but who has no interest in joining the ranks of the caped and colourful of the Marvel Cinematic Universe (who are obliquely referenced here and there and there's one amusing flashback sequence where her friend designs her a colourful costume -

eliciting much scorn from Jessica herself). Jess sets up the Alias Detective Agency in New York's Hell's Kitchen (also the setting for *Daredevil*), keeping under the radar as much as possible and chasing for work from urbane, troubled lawyer Jeri Hogarth (Carrie-Anne Moss). Jessica is eking out a living in somewhat less than salubrious circumstances and early in the series she enters into an extremely... *physical* relationship with fellow super-dude Luke Cage (Mike Colter), who runs a down-at-

heel backstreet bar. If you're fully abreast of all things Marvel, you'll know that Luke Cage - Hero for Hire in the Marvel Comics world - is also on Netflix's upcoming TV series slate.

But Jessica has her own demons - one of which appears to have returned from the dead to put her through hell in Hell's Kitchen as the series commences. He's called Kilgrave and he's an utter bastard. The result of medical experiments in his youth, Kilgrave is possessed of the power to control and influence the free will of others - he can control minds. He's clashed with Jessica in the past but she thought he was dead. By the end of the first episode, Kilgrave (his appearances are teasingly sparse in the first couple of episodes) has kidnapped and abused a teenage girl and - spoilers! - instructed her to shoot dead her own parents when she's finally reunited with them. As the series progresses, Kilgrave becomes a stronger and stronger presence in Jessica's troubled life - and a greater threat - and the reluctant plain clothes superhero discovers that everyone around her is at risk from an implacable foe who has no conscience and no compunction about destroying everyone in his path.

The show's called *Jessica Jones* and Krysten Ritter is magnetic as the sleek, dark-haired Jessica - but this is Kilgrave's show through and through. He's played, almost impossibly, by our own David Tennant (still easily the best and most popular of the modern *Doctor Whos*) and here, he delivers a performance of almost unimaginable evil and malevolence. It's an astonishing turn by one of our most gifted and versatile modern actors and, although he's not the Purple Man of his days in the 1960s *Daredevil* comic and later in Jessica Jones' own strip, he's always got a flash of purple in his wardrobe just to remind those familiar with





his earlier incarnations of his four-colour origins. Kilgrave slowly, inexorably, becomes more and more menacing and powerful and by about Episode Nine, he's thoroughly loathsome and detestable and yet incredibly charismatic and self-assured; the man has swagger to *spare*, despite his callousness and stomach-churning brutality. You won't know whether to admire him because of his power or to hate him unconditionally for the terrible ways he uses it.

Jessica Jones is another Marvel/Netflix triumph. Perhaps what's most extraordinary about the series, beyond the fact that it exists *at all*, is that it's showrun/exec produced by Melissa Rosenberg, who most recently provided the scripts for the insipid *Twilight* film series. *Who saw that coming?* A combination of intelligent, thoughtful writing, spot-on casting and typically slick and tireless production has crafted a series that, like *Daredevil*, pulls off the feat of being distinctly separate from the more family-friendly Marvel Cinematic Universe and yet, thanks to subtle visual motifs and sly references, is still very determinedly a part of it. **Jessica Jones** may be full of swearing, shagging and bone-crunching violence, but it's not impossible to imagine Iron Man or Thor doing a quick fly-by and not looking remotely out of place even in the deeper, darker world inhabited by Jessica, Luke and their richly-drawn friends and foes.

Jessica Jones is, frankly, in a different league to all those other glitzier, glossier TV superheroes – *The Flash*, *Arrow*, and *Supergirl* – because it manages the difficult feat of putting extraordinary, larger-than-life characters in a grimy, morally ambiguous real-world setting; you honestly feel that if people really had superpowers, they'd be like Jessica Jones and Matt Murdock's *Daredevil*, rather than Barry Allen's *Flash* or Peter Parker's *Spider-Man*. Like *Daredevil*, **Jessica Jones** is, as promised by Netflix, a real 'street level' superhero series and it raises the bar almost impossibly high for those who don cap and cowl for any future comic strip inspired show. Now then, Netflix... let's talk second series...

ASH VS. EVIL DEAD

Ash vs. Evil Dead (Starz in the USA and available exclusively in the UK via Virgin) is barking mad and bat-shit crazy. See you next month [*Eh? Is that all??* – Ed]. In all honesty, there's really not much more I need to say (not that that's ever stopped me in the past) about this lunatic TV spin-off from Sam Raimi's 1980s horror movie series. **Ash vs. Evil Dead** is utterly nuts and it knows it – and that's why it's such insane fun.

This is where I raise my hand above the parapet and admit I was never much of an *Evil Dead* fan – I only caught up with the original out of curiosity after seeing the 2013 remake and it just seemed outrageously over-the-top and tongue-in-cheek, ludicrously violent and gory and just a little bit silly. Watching the TV series now, it all starts to fall into place, because that's really the point. As I might have mentioned, the show is barking mad and bat-shit crazy and absolutely not to be taken seriously or treated as anything other than a mad, blood-

drenched horror spoof.

This is the show that fans of the original **Evil Dead** franchise might well have been dreaming of and, post-remake, thought they'd never get to see because the poor reception to the remake seemed to bring the whole concept to a grinding halt. But praise be to the voracious demands of American TV where a channel like Starz can take a punt on a show no traditional network would touch with a bargepole. **Ash vs. Evil Dead** comes out punching and it takes no prisoners. Lantern-jawed Bruce Campbell returns as Ash Williams, keeping his head down and working in a cheap electrical retail outlet some twenty years after his last encounter with the Deadites and the forces of 'Evil'. An accidental reading from the *Necronomicon* coincides with increased local incidents of paranormal nonsense and before long, Ash is under attack in his own mobile home and he's digging out his chainsaw hand-attachment to fend off slavering, blood-crazed demons in human form. Accompanied by his new friends, fellow



ASH VS. EVIL DEAD

ALSO SCREENING



LIMITLESS

The new hit US drama based on the 2011 movie stars Jake McDormon as Brian Finch, who manages to unlock the full mental capacity of his brain thanks to a new mysterious drug. *Dexter's* Jennifer Carpenter co-stars and we're promised occasional guest turns from the film's Bradley Cooper.

From January on Sky Living.

SHERLOCK

The Abominable Bride

Steven Moffat and Mark Gatiss' smug... sorry, *clever* contemporary reimagining of Conan Doyle's Great Detective puts Benedict Cumberbatch's Sherlock Holmes and Martin Freeman's Dr Watson back into a familiar Victorian setting. Or does it?

January 1st on BBC One.

TRIPPED

New British fantasy comedy starring Blake (*The Inbetweeners*) Harrison about two friends who find they have the ability to travel between parallel dimensions.

Now airing on E4.

store-workers Pablo (Ray Santiago) and Kelly (Dana DeLorenzo), Ash has no choice but to tool up and attempt to put the Evil genie back in the bottle. But he's got other problems too; he's being pursued by Ruby Knowby (Lucy Lawless), daughter of Professor Newby, slaughtered with his family way back in *Evil Dead II*, out for vengeance against the man she blames for the death of her loved ones. Who'll get their hands on Ash Williams first - the Evil Dead or the determined, remorseless Ruby?

Ash vs. Evil Dead is fast, furious, and brief - each episode runs for less than thirty minutes and that's very probably a good thing - and it's also great gory fun. It's relentlessly and imaginatively violent and, six episodes in, the story's much the same every week as someone gets possessed and tries to kill Ash and his crew who fight them off with an increasingly bizarre arsenal



THE WALKING DEAD

of homemade weaponry. Ash has just been furnished with a new powerful mechanical fist to enable him to wreak grimmer, bloodier havoc on the Evil Dead and their legions as they redouble their efforts to destroy the one man who can stop them spreading out and totally subsuming mankind.

Shamefully, embarrassingly entertaining, the show is full of nods to the film series (the continuity here is super-tight) and each episode contains at least one explosive, blood-dripping set piece of almost extraordinary violence and unpleasantness. Sam Raimi himself co-wrote and directed the first episode which really sets the style and tone of the series; this is high-adrenaline stuff, absolutely tongue-in-cheek, its scripts full of knowing winks and snappy, witty dialogue. Gorehounds will be in their element here and it's a refreshing change to watch a modern genre show which doesn't take itself too seriously (or even *at all* seriously) and just sets out to have a bit of mad, ramshackle and unapologetically unsophisticated R-rated fun. Season One runs to ten episodes and there'll be a second season next year. Go on, dump the increasingly clunky *American Horror Story* and join up with *Ash vs. Evil Dead*. It's not big or clever, but it's stupid and it's fun and sometimes that's exactly what the TV doctor ordered.

THE WALKING DEAD

Frankly it's amazing I've been able to watch any telly at all this month, the time I've spent wiping egg off my face following my comments last issue about Season Six of *The Walking Dead*. Having been bowled over by the opening three or four episodes of the new season and impressed by the audacity of the show's writers in apparently bumping off Glenn (Steven Yeun), one of the series' longest-running core characters, Episode Seven went on to deliver one of the biggest shit bag shuffles (now where have I heard that before?) in recent TV history. Glenn ain't dead. Bugger. Having kept audiences on tenterhooks (other hooks are available) for three or four weeks - and through a run of increasingly time-serving instalments - Episode Seven finally revealed the fate of young Glenn who, you may recall, was last

seen drowning under a sea of walkers with his flesh being torn open. Oh no he wasn't!! As many theorised - and I desperately hoped wasn't true - it was Nicholas (he'd fallen on top of Glenn after blowing his own brains out, remember) who was being ripped to shreds and our Glenn... managed to wriggle free and hide under that giant dumpster suspiciously positioned nearby. Did I say bugger already?

It's lame. Sorry, I just think it's lame.

The show's writing team have surrendered *The Walking Dead's* credibility - as much as a show about the survivors of a zombie apocalypse can be said to have any real credibility - for the sake of a tacky, drawn-out cliffhanger and it has, as far as I'm concerned, diminished the show forever. I don't think I can really take it seriously again now it's played such a cheap, blousy, tabloidy, ratings-grabbing trick. I have nothing against Glenn, he's a decent, solid, bread-and-butter character - but other equally stolid supporting turns have bitten the dust in the past and they've tended to stay dead. Glenn's miraculous (and rather unlikely) escape is such a transparent stunt - and patently not the sort of stunt the show's ever gone in for before - that it cheapens and demeans the series and makes its world much less believable and much less immersive. What's especially galling is the fact that, in the wake of Episode Three, the producers were issuing statements about how they have to make 'difficult choices' sometimes in moving the show forward. I'm all for a bit of clever misdirection which throws a genuine curveball into an ongoing narrative, but this was just clunky and unconvincing and it's sort of sullied *The Walking Dead* going forward and I'm not sure I can ever really trust it again. Wait, what's this... T-Dawg isn't dead, he actually fought the walkers off with his previously unmentioned heat-vision eyes?? Shane had an invisible impenetrable personal force-shield around him all along? Get out of here!! Well, why not? I really wouldn't put it past 'em now...

And a Merry Christmas to all of you at home...

Contact me via the magic of email at paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com or do the Twitter thing @PMount



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it's only a movie



a column by JORDAN ROYCE & THE ZOMBABY



"Is this the biggest WTF moment in genre movie history?"

Well it has come around yet again. It's time for the **It's Only A Movie Awards**, where we sort out the CGI miscarriages from the genre classics. You have not got long to wait to find out who has been unfortunate enough to be a recipient of one of this year's **Brozzers**. Aided, as always, by my living impaired sidekick – Zack, the one and only Zombaby. It's the day he now looks forward to all year, and has blown his STARBURST pocket money on a new tux and waistcoat combo in an effort to elevate proceedings to a more cultural level.

Zombaby: Aren't you going to talk about **The Hungry Games** first?

Jordan Royce: Oh yes. I suppose I had better delve briefly into the world of YA, and bring the readers up to date with my final thoughts on the franchise that I first took the hatchet to way back in issue 376.

Director Gary Ross pretty much ruined **The Hunger Games** back in 2012, because he is a talentless husk of a human being. Occasionally, he manages to put out a movie that is half decent, usually due to a tight script and concept. **Pleasantville** I really enjoyed, but it was *despite* this loser being on board. Back in 2012, **The Hunger Games** was the closest thing to a box office certainty that a director could wish for. The novels had stolen the YA zeitgeist from the soulless (I am not talking about the vampires) **Twilight** saga. Teenage girls and their unfortunate drag-along boyfriends were guaranteed

to lap the movie adaptation up, and yet he still managed to make a pile of turgid garbage. **The Hunger Games** was a flat, lifeless movie. Full of needless and deeply irritating camera work, coupled with terrible use of lighting, that made it impossible to even see what was going on in the last half hour of this miserable shit flick. Add to this the poorly realised CGI creations (yes mutt wolf-dogs, we are talking about you guys),

and you are left with a serious chore to sit through.

All of this was bad enough but there was also the shenanigans of poor old Peeta, played with an insipid, confusing gait by Josh Hutcherson. Whilst Jennifer Lawrence, Woody Harrelson, Stanley Tucci, Donald Sutherland, and the excellent Philip Seymour Hoffman were at least trying to elevate this badly filmed load of nonsense above its directorial handicap, the character of Peeta and the performance of Hutcherson just dragged the entire set of carriages off the rails. The scene where he uses his singular skillset to paint himself and disguise himself as a rock is unlikely to ever be unseated as the most misjudged sequence I have ever seen in a motion picture. I watched it again just before writing this. I had to. I mean, it couldn't be as bad as I remembered it? It's actually got worse with age, like a Dom Pérignon from the mirror universe in **Star Trek**. Yet I still tried to be reasonable and catch up with Katniss & co. in time for the grand finale being released. How did it go?

Well, to be fair I actually enjoyed **The Hunger Games: Catching Fire**. Although the affection for the novels had saved the first movie (despite Gary Ross), the negative critical response certainly did not go unnoticed, and despite cheeky Gary putting in for a pay rise, a return engagement was clearly as appealing as a rummage through Lindsay Lohan's lady

bits. Out goes the human talent bypass, and in came Francis Lawrence to helm the remaining instalments. With **Catching Fire**, the other Lawrence does a fantastic job of getting the series back on track. All the gripes over camera shots and lighting are immediately corrected with the end result being a movie that looks and feels both bigger in scope and budget. I particularly liked the cute trick of popping out the screen to IMAX proportions for the actual games segment. It helped to further immerse you in the action. I enjoyed this film, but still Peeta was pretty much a liability to the point that Katniss developing any affections for this whinging bed wetter seemed the most far-fetched aspect of the whole film. This time around, Peeta used his painting abilities to make himself look like a human-sized penis throughout the entire film.

Obviously not content with this quick franchise rescue, the Harry Potter model was employed for the final book, and next up was **The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1**. Again, this was a far superior movie than the first instalment, but this cash grab of splitting the final novel does damage it. The movie literally ends just as you are ready for the big payoff. The pacing was quite tight, effects were great, and you did get a genuine sense of progression from the previous two entries. There was a seismic shift away from the original **Hunger Games** concept, opting instead to explore the insurgency and impending revolution. Again, the cast were excellent except for Hutcherson, but at least you got less of him this time around as he spent the first half of the flick doing? You guessed it... whining, except this time around it was only on a view screen.

The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 2 again suffers badly from the splitting of the novel into two movies (although to be fair, did we really want one movie with a runtime of four and a half hours?). This time around we get flung right into the final fight to the Capitol, and the final fight for freedom against President Snow (Donald Sutherland was great in this one). The atmosphere was also much grittier and dour throughout, which is brave territory for the *cough* target audience. Sadly, this also meant several periods of reflection throughout (you may know these as the boring bits). At one point,

quite some screen time is devoted to a cat chasing a light being shone on a wall by Katniss! However, when it picks up the pace there are some great action scenes as the remaining characters advance on the Presidential Palace whilst avoiding *pods* which trigger many differing forms of retribution. Explosives, fire, machine guns, and the alien symbiotic from Spider-Man villain Venom.

So far, so good. Unfortunately, Peeta has been rescued and is along for the whole journey this time. He has been brain washed and unconvincingly tries to be a bit of a psycho. You won't be surprised to hear that much whining ensues culminating in him asking to be given

be his final appearance.

So in a final summing up, I still think **The Hunger Games** is a dreadful movie, but now I can see that it is an even bigger shame as it damages what otherwise is a pretty enjoyable fantasy franchise. **Catching Fire** is by far the best entry, and I found **Mockingjay Parts 1 and 2** to be flawed due to the splitting into two parts, but they at least gave a satisfactory ending, but not quite epic enough in my opinion. It shouldn't really take four and a half hours just to get across the message that 'all war becomes personal'. Obviously, the biggest problem I have is that Peeta not only survived, but he also finishes the movie by getting his end away

sorry for him. He might not have any friends.

J: Next up, it's the **Annie Wilkes Award** for biggest Superfan.

Z: Oh. It's him again. Cameron K. McEwan. What's a 'Superfan'?

J: Well generally speaking, in a purely hypothetical sense, it's a person with usually no discernable talents of their own that unhealthily fixates over every aspect of a movie franchise or TV show. Some of them do their best to ingratiate themselves with the production team of said fixated show or movie, right up until they receive the restraining order. They have also been known to write books on the subject just to be seen as an authority figure. They often dress up as characters from the show whilst at home alone, and can often be found at fan conventions holding court with other enthusiasts of a lower caste. They have also been known to pretend to be the showrunner or director and to practice speeches in front of the mirror using a **HP Sauce** bottle as a temporary BAFTA/Oscar. Masturbation is usually required to cessare periods of extreme loneliness. Tears are often shed on sleepless nights.

Z: Oh no!!!

J: I know *sigh*. Now we have the **Pierce Brosnan - I Want More Dosh Award** for most unsubtle attempt at a pay rise. This goes to...

Z: Daniel Craig. Hey, that's not nice - I like him!

J: It's OK, son, let me explain. It was simply that time again in the world of James Bond known as 'the endeth of contract', and Mr Craig certainly rose to the occasion with a series of cranky pants interviews where he openly let everyone know he was sick of playing Bond. A ploy successfully employed by Roger Moore for his last two Bond movies, but it didn't work out very well for Mr Craig's predecessor. I have a hunch that Daniel Craig will have more luck with this tactic.

Z: That's alright, then.

J: Now it's time to address the intelligentsia amongst us. It's the **Lars Von Trier Award** for this year's most pretentious fantasy movie.

Z: *munch*

J: Put the peanut M&Ms away!

Z: [Looks sheepish] It's **Jupiter Ascending**

J: Just when you thought the Wachowskis were about to recapture their faded form, they present us with this weird space opera that bombards us with mind-blowing visuals, and creative special effects that constantly jarred with camp buffoonery like Channing Taters-Deep and his cosplay elf. Now we come to the **Bella Swan Award** for



"annd the loser is, ME - I end up with this sad, whinging specimen of manhood!"

some suicide pills, much to the chagrin of Katniss. Seriously, I would have sat him down, made him comfy, and given him as many as he wanted! Sadly, he does make it to the end, and [SPOILERS] she does end up with him. Yes you read that correctly. Liam Hemsworth as Gale is given a wide berth, and she settles down with Peeta, has children, and wears a girly dress in a flowery field. Well, so much for the feminist message, eh?

Despite Peeta, both parts of *Mockingjay* are at least enjoyable, but I enjoyed the dystopian game show element more than the revolution it triggered. That was my *in*. The only reason I bothered to watch it in the first place. **The Running Man, Series 7**, and the sublime **Battle Royale**, all conveyed the idea that oppression in the future would be less about guns, weaponry, and fighting. It would be oppression via cameras, vid feeds, celebrity, and spin. **The Running Man** promptly wrapped up and we were at the credits within minutes of the end of the narrative-feeding game show. The revolution was treated as a given, as it was the least interesting part of the story.

Whilst the cast were again mostly on form (with one exception), the death of Philip Seymour Hoffman was extremely noticeable, contrary to most critical opinion. They must have only had a few minutes in the can, as he is almost a ghost in this final entry. His final lines read out as a parting letter for Katniss. This just did not feel right. It is a shame that this would

with Katniss. Now THERE is *real* fantasy cinema for you!

[Cue the usual cheap fanfare. We had to get Danny Elfman again. Zimmer isn't doing freebies as of yet (it's only a matter of time!)]

J: Me and my adopted offspring are now ready to introduce the **It's Only A Movie Awards** for 2015. Soon we will all know who has bagged a **Brozzer**, but first let us start with the annual **Ben Kingsley Award** for the biggest tosser in the world of sci-fi. Rip that envelope open...

Z: This goes to Cameron K. McEwan of Blogtor Who for throwing a hissy fit over being mentioned in *The STARBURST Blue Box Podcast*. Was he nasty, Dad?

J: Yeah. I think he is a real bell-end! Cameron K. McEwan sent yours truly an email demanding that podcast episode 177 be removed, and full apologies be printed, and that refusal would mean court papers! Obviously, STARBURST would not be censored for simply reporting on well-published accusations (you can find them easily online, so you can check them out yourselves, if you can be bothered reading about this saddo!), and we refused. Said bell-end then spouted all over the Internet that he was going to sue STARBURST, with his no win, no fee solicitor. The lack of any court papers would seem to validate anyone whose assessment was that he is simply a tragic, and toothless clown.

Z: I don't think he is nasty, I just feel really

services against the cause of feminism.

Z: It says **Jurassic World** writers Rick Jaffa, Amanda Silver, Derek Connolly, and Colin Trevorrow for their part in the creation of character Claire Dearing. Was that the lady that didn't like kids?

J: It certainly was. What a shock it was to find in 2015 that a career woman has to be portrayed as an overbearing dragon that is lacking in that special quality that could allow them to be a mother as well. Much fun was poked wrongly at her choice of jungle footwear, but in reality, it was the fact that she needed an injection of cock to make the transition into a nice person that was the most offensively Neanderthal suggestion.

Z: Can I have some of that stuff she had? I want to be nice too...

J: Err, let's get a move on shall we? It's time for the **Daniel Radcliffe Award** for worst actor on Planet Earth. This honour goes to...

Z: Die Courtney, for everything he ever did, but mostly for wrecking **Terminator**. ?? [looks very confused]. I don't know that word!

J: That's JAI Courtney, and don't worry, we don't remember how to spell the title of that film either. Just when you thought the lunk-headed performances squeezed out of Sam Worthlessness could never be equaled, along comes Jai Courtney to steal the crown by sabotaging the rescue movie of the **Terminator** franchise. While he is still working no film property is safe.

Z: What is next?

J: The **It's Only Some Moobies Award** for worst sci-fi movie, which is...

Z: The **Fantastic Four**.

J: Not only the worst sci-fi flick of 2015, also one of the worst comic book adaptations ever made. The history of this historic misfire is sure to be



the stuff of legend. Josh Trank, hot off the success of **Chronicle**, gets the opportunity of a lifetime, and blows it on a level no one could have imagined possible. Wrecked accommodation, reducing cast members to tears, drugs, booze (even getting some of the actors in on it), and then finally going bonkers and locking himself away during the second half of the production. Poor old Matthew Vaughn was roped in to re-film the ending, but it was too late. The movie is one of the biggest box office bombs of all time. His excuse? Low self-esteem due to his large man boobs at college. So it's perfectly understandable, then?

Z: He's naughty. Maybe **Fantastic Four 2** will be better?

J: **Fantastic Four 2?** Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha. Bwah ha ha ha. [Wipes tears from eyes, and regains composure] Now we turn to the **Daniel Radcliffeless Award** for worst horror movie, which is...

Z: The **Woman in Black: Angel of Death**. Ohh... scary.

J: Not really... The **Hammer** renaissance hits the skids with the follow up to the 2012 movie that wrongly suggested that Daniel Radcliffe would actually end up with a career in acting. Minus a notable star, a decent director, and the excellent Jane Goldman exercising her writing chops, **The Woman in Black: Angel of Death** was an utter disappointment. A movie whose characters' motivations are totally unexplored, the titular Woman just appears to be doing it all for shits and giggles, leaving you to make up your own story to surround it all with. Quiet bit, loud noise, quiet bit, loud noise, quiet bit, loud noise, quiet bit, loud noise, quiet bit, loud noise, credits. At least we have saved you the trouble of watching it. Director Jon Croker (shit) needs to have a career rethink at this point.

Z: You can give him a job at **STARBURST**.

J: Okaaay, moving swiftly on. We need to know which movie has bagged the coveted **Soz For Saying You Were Doctor Who – Domnhall Gleeson Award** for best sci-fi movie.

Z: **Ex_Machina**. What does that mean?

J: It means there's a robot in it. Director Alex Garland brings us one of those sci-fi treats that everyone says they just don't make anymore. The cast is amazing, especially Alicia Vikander who is pitch perfect in her portrayal of an artificial lifeform on its journey towards humanity. Cinematography, soundtrack all present and exquisitely correct, and a gripping script. All together – A modern classic. So that's sci-fi sorted. Who bags **The Movie That John Carpenter Never Made Award**?

Z: It Follows.

J: An incredible indie horror flick that came out of nowhere (an unfortunate turn of phrase when describing a story about a supernatural STD). Great performances, and slow burning suspense, framed in a 1980's prism. The soundtrack alone was worth the admission price. We are nearly at the end now. Let's find out the winner of the **Mel Gibson Sugar Boobies Award** for best fantasy movie.

Z: It's **Mad Max: Fury Road**.

J: George Miller doing a new **Mad Max** movie starring fan favourite Tom Hardy – expectations were high. The trailers looked awesome (but don't they always?). Turns out the movie was better than any of us could have expected. The first 30 minutes alone were one high octane chase that was burnt onto your retinas. Using a simplistic visual sequencing to tell its tale, **Mad Max: Fury Road** never wasted a frame, and the cast were bang on the money. Wisely eschewing computer vomiting in favour of practical effects with real vehicles, it was like Max Rockatansky had never been away. Now, finally we have one last envelope to open. We are giving a special **Brozzers**. It's the **Ben Affleck Memorial Award** for an outstanding new TV series. Which proudly goes to...

Z: **Daredevil**.

J: Shame on you who thought that old horn head had had his one chance on screen and blown it. Netflix brought him back onto the small screen in a TV series that was simultaneously violent, realistic, and yet thoroughly comic book. Critical acclaim secured a second season, and we can look forward to watch him hanging with the other Netflix marvels in the upcoming **Defenders** series. Well that wraps things up for the **Brozzers** until next year. There is just time for a bedtime story before Zombaby calls it a day.

[Zombaby excitedly hands me his copy of **The Tenth Pan Book of Horror Stories**]

Z: See you all next year! [Waves]

"Be a hugger- Not a biter!"
Love Zack
The Zombaby

Jordan Royce can be contacted at jordan.royce@starburstmagazine.com and hosts the STARBURST Radio Show every Wednesday 9pm until 12am GMT on Fab Radio International – www.fabradiointernational.com also available from iTunes as a Podcast

Zack The Zombaby lives in a house full of toys and games with his Mummy, Daddy and Nocturna The Vambaby. He helps out at STARBURST for his pocket money. You can send him hugs at zombaby@starburstmagazine.com

It's time for the annual **Brozzers**, and for Zombaby it's the major social event on his little calendar...

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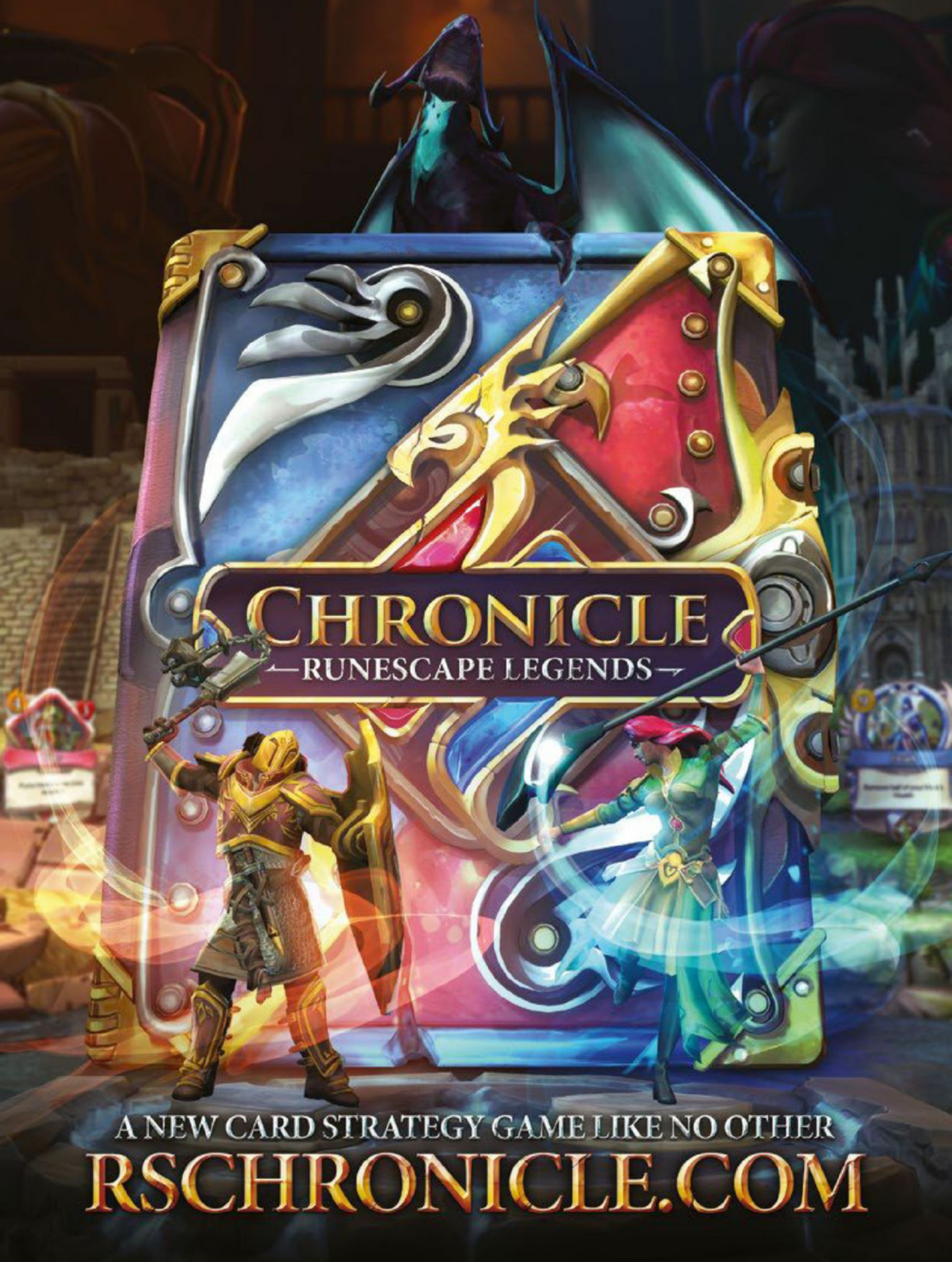
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